

THE **EDIBLE**  
**SCHOOLYARD**  
PROJECT

## PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC

**Summary:** In this lesson students will explore the guiding principles that inform and define organic agriculture. Students will identify and discuss the four principles of organic before delving into the ecology of a garden.

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Teacher Notes:**

- This lesson will have students explore the four core values of organic through discussion before diving into an exploration of ecology in the garden. The other values of care, fairness, and health could be further explored through discussion as well.
- If teaching asynchronously or assigning the lesson plan as homework, for the sections that instruct students to READ, consider recording yourself reading the sections aloud and sending the recording to students. This adaptation offers a helpful strategy for differentiating learning that supports all students, especially English Language Learners.
- The “READ” sections of this lesson plan can be used as talking points or as a script to introduce activities. Please note, these sections simply provide brief introductions to the topics. We recommend using your experiences to add more information and context to the topics being covered.
- If you are teaching this lesson in the garden, we suggest completing the sections as a whole class or in small groups. The garden is a great place for discussion-based lessons.
- This lesson is part of Edible Schoolyard Project’s [Understanding Organic](#) curriculum and is the second lesson in the “core lessons” of the curriculum.



# PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC

## Vocabulary:

- **Ecology:** the study of living organisms including where they are, how many there are, and what their relationships are with one another.
- **Biodiversity:** the variety of life and living things.

**READ:** Organic is both a set of rules and regulations defined by governments, and a set of ideas, principles, and values that farmers, gardeners, and ranchers follow. This lesson explores some of the values and principles that define organic agriculture. These principles of organic are from the [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements](#) (IFOAM). IFOAM is an international organization that advocates for organic agriculture.

IFOAM's four principles of organic are **Health, Ecology, Fairness, and Care**. In this lesson you are going to explore those values and talk about how they apply to your life and to farming.

**DISCUSS:** Review [the cards for the four principles of organic](#). For each card, follow these steps:

- Read the word and the definition of the word.
- Then complete a [pair-share](#):
  - What does this word mean to you?
  - How do you practice it in your life?
- Read the IFOAM value statement. Summarize:
  - How does this value inform organic agriculture?
  - What is an example that demonstrates this value in action?
- Brainstorm:
  - What are other examples of how that value might show up in organic farming practices?

**EXPLORE:** In this activity you will explore the garden while making observations. This exploration will help you deepen your understanding of how different forms of life and their environments are connected. These connections are the focus of **ecology**.



# PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**READ:** In this activity we are going to take time to *notice*. What does that mean? When we focus on day-to-day tasks, we don't always pay attention to our surroundings. *Noticing* allows us to pay attention to little things, like how the weather is, or what we observe in the soil. While you explore, see how much you can slow down. Allow yourself to wander and wonder. Take the included set of garden exploration questions with you and see if you can complete them as you wander.

**RESPOND:**

In this lesson you discussed the four principles of organic farming and explored the ecology of a garden. Now you're going to quickly review those principles and consider how your choices have impacts beyond ourselves.

The four principles of organic are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Which of these principles feels most important to you and your community? Why?

## Garden Exploration Questions [Student resource]

**Directions:** Take this question sheet into the garden with you as you explore. Think about your observations and be ready to share them with your classmates.

- What types of life do you notice?
  - Can you find five different types of plants?
  - Can you find five different types of insects?
  - Do you see or hear any birds or other larger animals?
  
- Do you notice the different living things interacting? How do they interact with each other? Do some eat others or get their food from them?
  - Can you find any bugs that are resting on or eating from plants?
  - Do you notice any pollinator insects, like bees or butterflies, that are both harvesting food and helping the plants reproduce?
  - Have you found any birds or other animals that eat insects?
  
- Do you think there are living things that you don't see or hear? Where would they be? Why do you think they exist?
  - Many forms of life are microscopic! If you had a powerful microscope, what would you want to look at?
  
- What do you think would happen to the bugs and other living things if all the plants disappeared?
  - What do you think would happen if only one type of plant was living in the entire garden? Would there be as many different types of bugs in the garden?