

Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program
2008 HIGHLIGHTS

FRTEP UNIT: Arizona

PROGRAM AREA: Nutrition and Horticulture

PROGRAM TITLE: School Gardens

ISSUE(S) ADDRESSED: This program addresses the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service's (CREES) Strategic Goal 6 to "Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural resource Base and Environment."

There was no history of diabetes recorded within the Hualapai Nation prior to the 1970's. As soda, fast and or processed foods became popular and easily obtainable, the rate of diabetes also increased. Home gardening which produced the staples corn, beans and squash declined and along with it a decrease in harvesting and use of native plants and traditional foods as well. When youth are presented with the health benefits of eating fresh vegetables and given the opportunity to grow and taste them first hand, they experience something that will shape their food preferences throughout life as well as give them information to share with others in their families.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: The First/Second grade teacher in the Peach Springs Elementary School wanted to introduce to her students a hands on gardening experience to introduce the concept of growing things, the knowledge of where foods come from, and the actual harvest and consumption of fresh vegetables. We put together a program to address those needs as well as the nutrition aspects identified on the reservation. Project goals are : 1) increase exposure to fresh vegetables when it came time for harvest, 2) create a "can do" experience to growing vegetables in the harsh climate and soil native to this reservation, 3) provide take home materials to include families in the program.

PROGRAM IMPACT: 2008 was the first year for the program in which approximately 26 students were instructed. Although most of the students did not volunteer to work in the gardens during the summer, they felt that they had increased their knowledge about gardening and harvesting by the actual seed starting indoors, preparing the garden site, planting seeds in the garden and transplanting their started seedlings, watching the plants emerge and then checking the progress when school resumed in the fall. They were able to taste several of the plant varieties that they had started. Response from the teacher, students and principal were positive to the point that a second year curriculum is being planned to include a school

wide taste testing and some sort of enticement to being on the garden team during summer break.

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