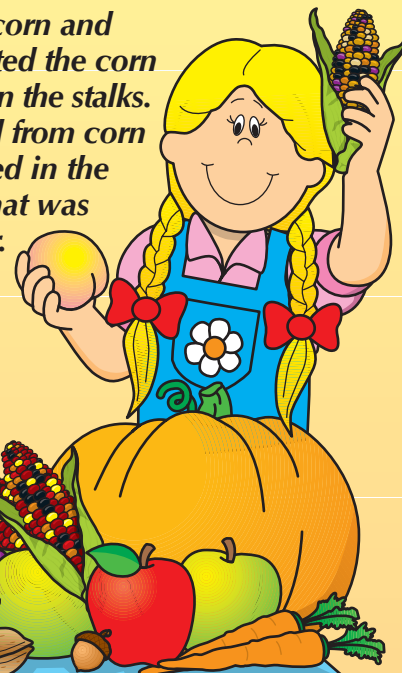


# Harvest Celebrations throughout the World

After the hard work of harvesting crops, people all over the world celebrate with festivals, food, and fun. While the times of harvest festivals vary in different parts of the world, November is a good time to acquaint students with the diverse ways that people all over the world live, harvest, and celebrate!

## Did You Know?

- The ancient Greeks and Romans celebrated the harvest by offering newly-harvested foods to the goddess of corn—Demeter to the Greeks and Ceres to the Romans.
- Many past cultures believed that spirits lived inside corn and made it grow. Egyptians would cry when they harvested the corn to show the spirits that they were sorry for cutting down the stalks.
- In England, it was thought that the corn spirit hopped from corn stalk to corn stalk, and that the corn spirit was trapped in the last stalk. This last stalk was often made into a doll that was used in rituals to ensure a good harvest the next year.
- To many Native American tribes, the Green Corn Ceremony marked the beginning of a new year.



## Literature Selections

*Itse Selu: Cherokee Harvest Festival* by Daniel Pennington: Charlesbridge Publishing, 1994. (Illustrated storybook, 32 pg.) Follow a Cherokee family through their preparations for and celebration of the Green Corn Ceremony.

*The Moon Lady* by Amy Tan: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992. (Storybook, 32 pg.) A grandmother tells her granddaughters about celebrating the Harvest Moon Festival in China when she was young.

*The Wind and the Sukkah* by Aydel Lebovics: Merkos Linyonei Chinuch, 1990. (Storybook, 32 pg.) The wind brings needed materials to a man building a Sukkah for the Jewish harvest celebration, Sukkoth.

*Harvest Festivals Around the World* by Judith Hoffman Corwin: Julian Messner, 1995. (Informational book, 48 pg.) Emphasizes ancient civilizations and indigenous peoples and includes 15 activities, such as recipes, masks, dolls, paper flowers, hieroglyphics, and other crafts.



## Homowo

The Ga people of the west African nation of Ghana mock an ancient famine each year at harvest time with their festival, Homowo, which means to hoot at hunger. The celebration lasts for three days. People spend time with family, honor their ancestors, and enjoy a large feast of freshly harvested foods, including soups made from yam, corn, or palm. Kpekpele is a traditional food eaten during the harvest celebration in Ghana. It is made from corn meal and palm oil. On the last day of Homowo, the chief ruler of the Ga people walks through the town sprinkling kpekpele in the air to honor their Ga ancestors.



## Twins Party

During Homowo, twins and triplets are honored as special gifts from God. Twins and triplets are decorated with body paints and are served special foods made from yams. Allow children to talk about any twins or triplets they know at school or in their families. Have students write and decorate special letters to these people that inform them of the special status of twins during this African festival.



## Yam Festival Snack

The yam is a common vegetable grown in west Africa and is a major part of the Homowo festival. Mashed yams with hard boiled eggs is often made for ceremonies or celebrations, such as the yam festival for twins during Homowo. Yams are root vegetables and are similar to potatoes. Let students explore yams by comparing them to potatoes. In small groups, examine yams and potatoes and outline their physical differences. Provide small bowls of mashed yams and mashed potatoes for students to taste and compare.

## Kente Cloth

During Homowo, people can be seen wearing brightly colored kente cloth draped over their shoulders as a kind of toga. Kente cloth is woven with bright colors in geometric patterns. Weaving kente cloth is a traditional craft in Ghana. Let students create unique kente cloth patterns of their own. Let each child divide a sheet of white paper into nine sections. Draw the same geometric pattern (stripes, zigzags, triangles, etc.) in every other section on the page (in the four corners and the middle) and color them all the same. Pick a different pattern to draw in the remaining sections, coloring them all the same as well. Display the kente cloths on a background of black paper.



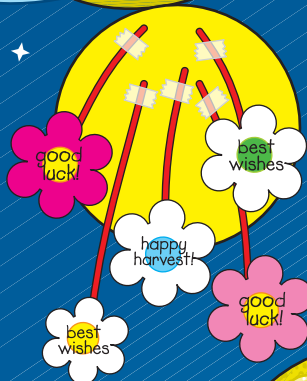
# Harvest Moon Festival



In mid-Autumn, the full moon is considered to be at its biggest and brightest. During this time, the moon is called a harvest moon because the bright moon enables farmers to harvest into the night. The Chinese say this time marks the birthday of the moon. The Chinese Harvest Moon Festival celebrates the rice and wheat harvests and commemorates the legend of Chang-O, a woman who flew to the moon and can still be seen when it is full.

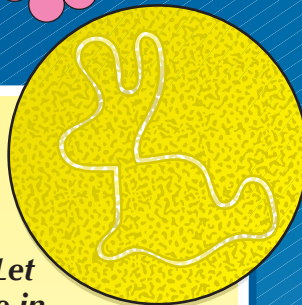
## Flowers from the Moon

It was once believed in China that during the Harvest Moon Festival, flowers would fall from the moon and that good luck would come to those who saw them. Let students make good luck moon cards to celebrate the harvest moon. Cut out two yellow circles and tape them together to form a card. Tape several strands of yarn inside the card and tape a flower cut from paper to the end of each strand. Write messages of good luck and happy harvest on each flower, then gather and place the flowers and yarn inside the card. When cards are opened, lucky flowers will fall from the moon card.



## The Lady In the Moon

In China, the man in the moon is seen as a woman or a hare. Let students interpret what they see in the moon with this full moon craft. Cut a circle of poster board for each student and let her draw a simple picture on the circle of what she sees in the moon. Trace over the lines with glue, lay heavy string along the glue pattern, and let dry. Crumple and unfold a sheet of aluminum foil. Paint a thin layer of glue over the circle and string, and carefully press the foil (shiny side up) onto the circle, pressing around the string. Fold and glue the excess foil around the back of the circle. Patch tears with extra foil and let dry. Mix two parts yellow paint with one part water and paint over the foil. Gently rub over the picture with a paper towel, leaving the paint in the creases.



## Moon Cakes

Moon cakes are the traditional food to eat and exchange with friends and family during the Harvest Moon Festival. Moon cakes are yellow and round like the full moon, made with nuts or a bean paste, and are often stamped with a picture of a hare. According to legend, the Chinese won an important battle because of notes baked into moon cakes that told troops about the time of attack. Have students write secret messages, with nontoxic pens or markers, on the insides of paper cupcake liners. Place a second liner inside the first and bake. Cover cupcakes with light yellow frosting and sprinkle with sugar. Let students exchange moon cakes and read their secret messages.



# Green Corn Ceremony

Many Native American tribes celebrate the corn crop before the harvest work is done. A Green Corn Ceremony (also called Green Corn Festival and Green Corn Dance) is held when the corn becomes ripe, to thank the spirits for the corn harvest. Traditions vary from tribe to tribe, but usually the celebration lasts for several days and includes games, story-telling, ceremonial dances, and a big feast. People celebrating the festival are forbidden to eat the new corn before official prayers have been offered to the spirits.

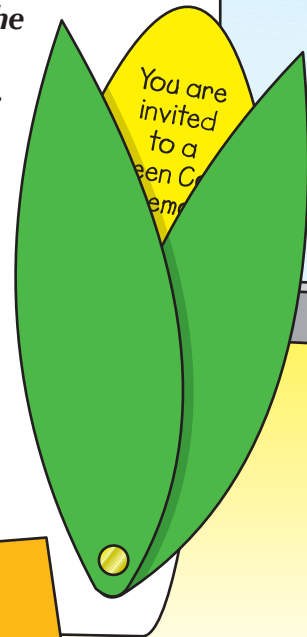
### Ball Game

Several Native American tribes play a game with a pole and a ball during the Green Corn Festival. The object of the game is to throw a small ball at a pole and hit it at the highest point. Display a strip of brown paper vertically on a wall. Allow students to take turns throwing a small bean bag ball at the "pole" and marking where the ball hit with their name. See who can throw the ball highest on the "pole."



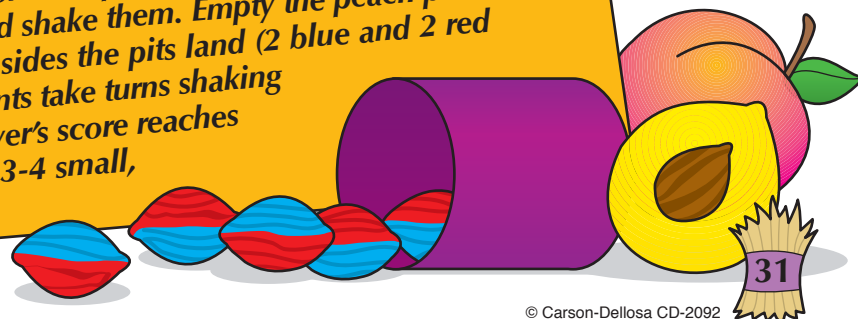
### Green Corn Invitation

When the corn was almost ripe, a Cherokee high chief would send a message to the villages, inviting them to a Green Corn Ceremony. Each village would then send back an ear of green corn to accept the invitation. Make corn-shaped invitations to a Green Corn Ceremony and "peel" back the green husks to reveal the message inside. Let each child draw an ear of corn on yellow paper and cut out. Draw two corn husk shapes that are slightly larger than the corn shape. Overlap the green husk pieces and place on top of the yellow corn. Fasten the layers together with a paper fastener at the base of the corn. Slide the husks to the sides and write an invitation to an imaginary Green Corn Ceremony on the yellow corn. Have students include information about what might occur at the ceremony based on what they have learned.



### Peach Stone Game

At the end of the Green Corn Ceremony, some Native Americans play a game of chance with painted peach pits. Paint peach pits blue on one side and red on the other side. Assign a value to each color, for example, red = 2 and blue = 5. Place the pits in a plastic container with a lid and shake them. Empty the peach pits onto a table. Count up points based on which sides the pits land (2 blue and 2 red would equal 14 points). Let pairs of students take turns shaking and emptying the container until one player's score reaches 100. (If peach pits are not available, use 3-4 small, flat rocks.)

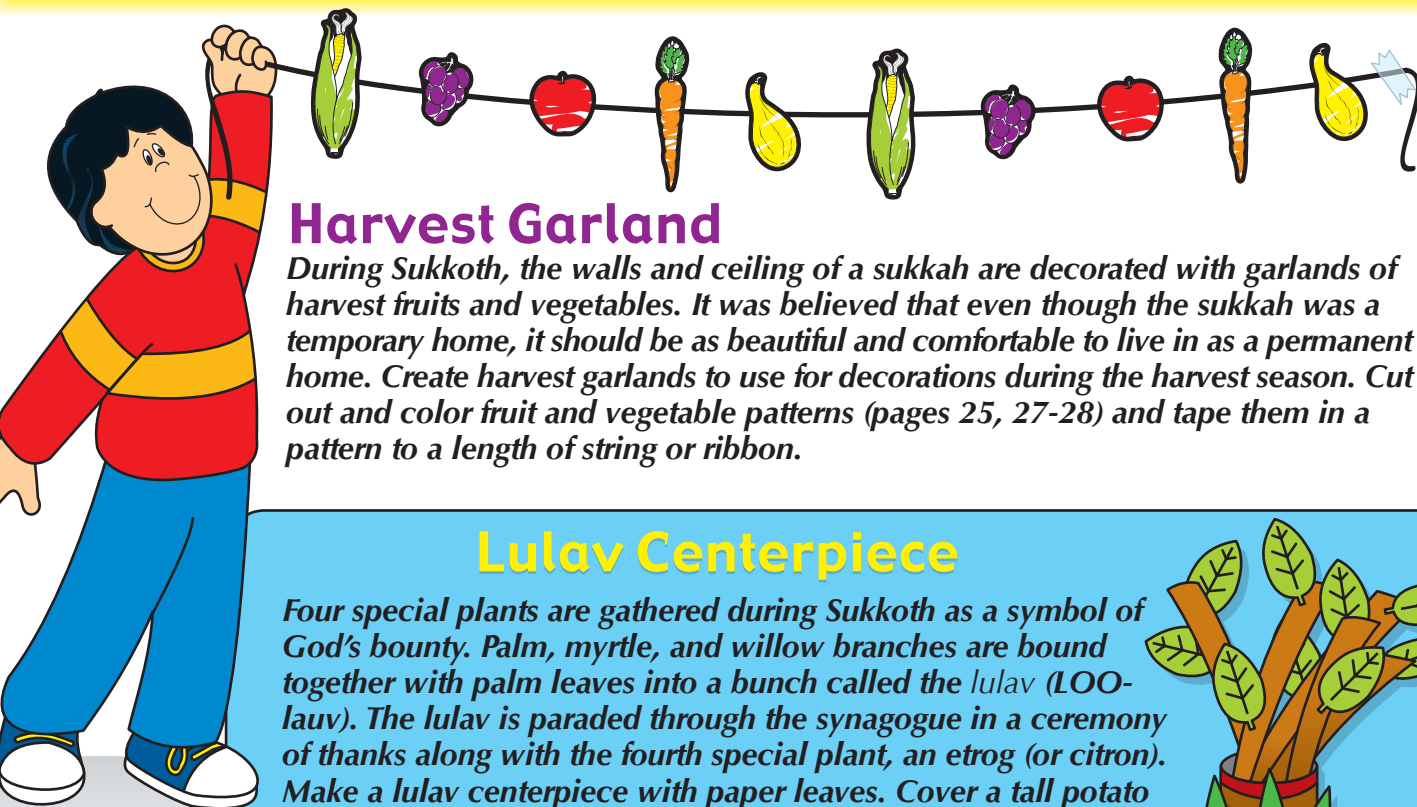
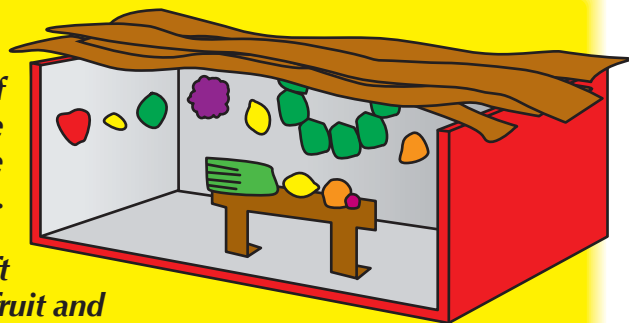


# Sukkoth

*Sukkoth (SOO-kot) is a Jewish Holiday that celebrates the harvest. Sukkoth is called the Festival of Booths because it recalls the time the Jewish people wandered in the desert for forty years, living in temporary shelters, and also the Jewish farming tradition of living in huts in the field during harvest. To celebrate Sukkoth, special plants are gathered; a booth, or sukkah (SOO-kah), is built and decorated; and a feast is enjoyed in the sukkah.*

## Build A Sukkah

*A sukkah is made from temporary walls and includes a roof made from loose branches that provide shade but allow the stars to show through at night, reminding the Jewish people of the days when their ancestors dwelt in temporary shelters. Make a 3-dimensional sukkah from a shoe box. Have an adult cut one long side of the box out with scissors or a craft knife. Cut out a table with two legs from brown paper and fruit and vegetable shapes from colored paper. Glue some fruits and vegetables to the walls and some to the table. Bend back the legs of the table at the bottom and tape the resulting flaps to the bottom of the box. Cut long, thin strips of brown paper and glue across the top of the booth, leaving spaces in between. Display the sukkah during Sukkoth.*



## Harvest Garland

*During Sukkoth, the walls and ceiling of a sukkah are decorated with garlands of harvest fruits and vegetables. It was believed that even though the sukkah was a temporary home, it should be as beautiful and comfortable to live in as a permanent home. Create harvest garlands to use for decorations during the harvest season. Cut out and color fruit and vegetable patterns (pages 25, 27-28) and tape them in a pattern to a length of string or ribbon.*

## Lulav Centerpiece

*Four special plants are gathered during Sukkoth as a symbol of God's bounty. Palm, myrtle, and willow branches are bound together with palm leaves into a bunch called the lulav (LOO-lauv). The lulav is paraded through the synagogue in a ceremony of thanks along with the fourth special plant, an etrog (or citron). Make a lulav centerpiece with paper leaves. Cover a tall potato chip can with brown construction paper and add "palm" leaves (cut strips of dark green paper into long, palm leaf shapes). Cut out several willow and myrtle leaf patterns (page 37) and glue them onto long strips of brown poster board. Arrange the branches in the container along with a few extra "palm" leaves. If possible, show pictures of the plants or bring in actual samples for the class to view.*

