



Vegetable Sauce Sorting



It's May on Tractor Ted's farm, and everyone is busy with the asparagus harvest. Vegetables come in all shapes and sizes – and long, thin asparagus makes a good starting point for a vegetable shape sorting activity. Once the vegetables have been sorted, they can be used to make a delicious and nutritious pasta sauce.

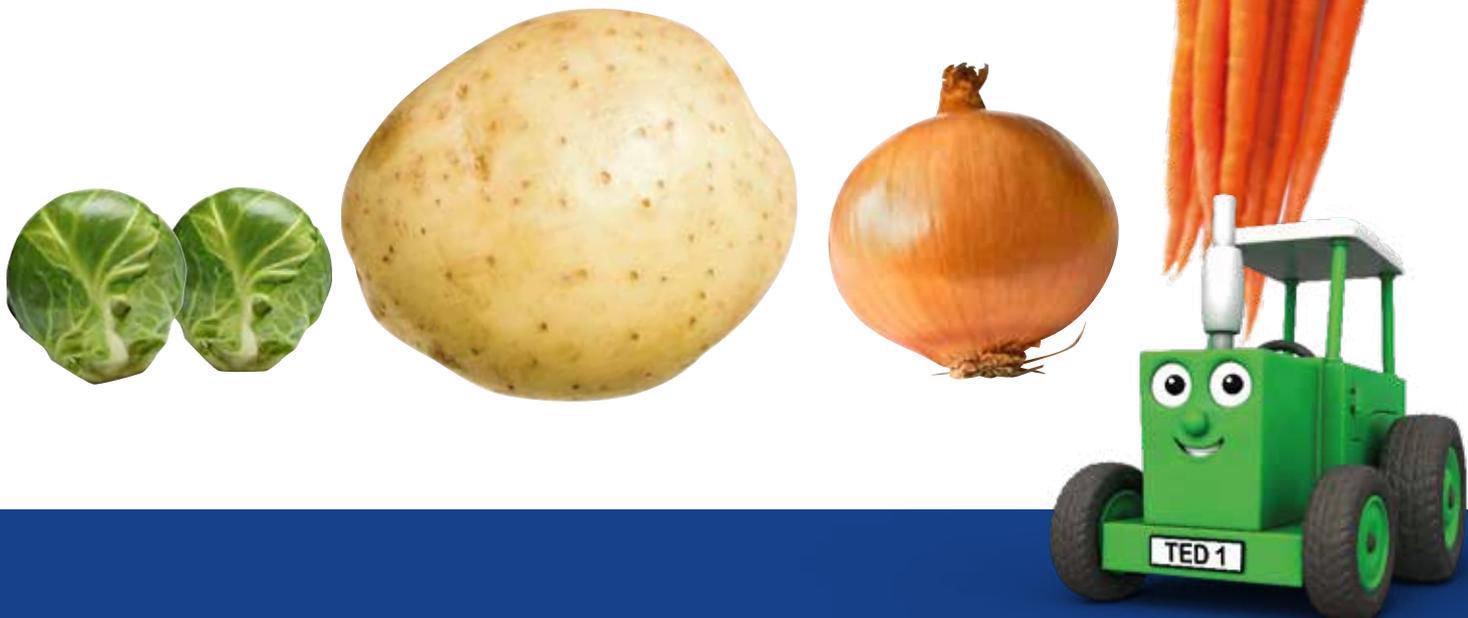
THIS ACTIVITY...

- gives children the opportunity to sort items into two separate categories
- encourages children to compare the size and shape of different vegetables
- enables children to explore texture and taste
- helps children to learn the names of vegetables
- introduces children to a variety of shape and texture words
- encourages children to explore similes and comparisons

WHAT TO DO

Gather a selection of vegetables, making sure that you have a 'long' category and a 'round' category'. Apart from asparagus, the 'long' category can include a celery stick, a carrot, a French bean, a leek and a courgette. The 'round' category can include a potato, a turnip, a small swede, a sprout, an onion and a tomato. Name and explore the vegetables with the children, talking about colours, shapes, sizes, textures and scents. Cut into the vegetables and encourage willing children to have a taste (avoiding potato as it contains toxins when raw).

Focus on the asparagus and one of the round vegetables, such as the potato. Compare the different shapes – the long, thin asparagus and the squat, round potato. Help the children to sort the remaining vegetables into two groups – long and thin like the asparagus or squat and round like the potato. Once the activity is finished, save the vegetables to chop up and make into pasta sauce.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- As you talk about the vegetables with the children, introduce size words as a natural part of the conversation – large, small, tiny, huge, long, tall, short, thick and thin.
- Focus on the different sizes of the vegetables within each category. For example, the leek is much thicker than the asparagus; the turnip is smaller than the swede.
- With younger children, limit the number of vegetables to just two or three in each category.
- Introduce similes to describe sizes and textures – the onion skin is like tissue paper; the courgette is as smooth as my cheek. Encourage older children to come up with their own comparisons.
- Share picture books with a vegetable theme, including Helen Cooper's Pumpkin Soup and Delicious (Corgi), and Vivian French's Oliver's Vegetables (Hodder), and Susan Chandler and Elena Odriozola's, Vegetable Glue
- The pasta sauce can be made with just a few different vegetables – although it's useful to highlight to the children that you are using up the vegetables from the sorting activity, rather than throwing them away.
- Talk about the nutritional value of vegetables and how important it is to eat some vegetables every day.

VEGETABLE PASTA SAUCE

Chop the vegetables into small pieces. Put vegetables that take longer to cook (swede, carrot, turnip, celery, leek) into a large saucepan and cover with low salt vegetable stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the vegetables that cook more quickly (asparagus, courgette, tomato, beans) and a little more stock. Cook for another ten minutes or so, until the vegetables are tender. Blend the vegetables to make a sauce, and stir in a tablespoon of olive oil. Mix with pasta and sprinkle on grated cheese or sausage chunks for protein.

