

# Produce as power and the seeds of independence?

## General

### Grade Level

Middle School

### Author Info

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### Type of Lesson

Challenge

### Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

### Duration

60-90 minutes

## Challenge Question

Over the course of his lifetime, Thomas Jefferson owned over six hundred enslaved African Americans. While he only freed approximately nine of these enslaved individuals either during his life or upon his death, it is clear—through source material and witness accounts—that a handful of enslaved individuals were able to exercise choice and economic/physical mobility within the limitations of their daily lives at Monticello and despite their enslaved condition. One of the ways in which they did so was through the use of subsistence gardens created for the African American community at Monticello. Your challenge is to create a poster, either digitally, or one that can be uploaded, which illustrates the ways in which African Americans used the opportunities afforded to them at their garden to forge a more independent way of life.

## Rationale

Students will not only understand how African American individuals at Monticello used the subsistence gardens to provide for themselves and their families, but how they used them to forge a more independent way of life within a system that stripped them of their basic liberties.

## Notes to Teacher

Depending on the nature of your classroom, you can edit the “African American Gardens at Monticello” article, and condensing it in order to better narrow your students’ focus.

## Steps

1. Go to the following article, and read independently:  
<http://www.monticello.org/site/house-and-gardens/african-american-gardens-monticello>  
As you read, highlight and annotate all of the ways in which the enslaved African Americans at Monticello were able to exercise choice, take advantage of opportunity, or forge a more independent way of life through the use of the African American gardens.
2. From the reading, choose for ways in which different individuals were able to use the gardens to their advantage. One example might be that Madison and Eston Hemings, sons of Sally and most likely Jefferson, were thought to have sold at least 100 cabbages to Jefferson himself in 1822, thereby taking economic advantage of the very individual who enslaved African Americans for his own economic prosperity.
3. After you’ve chosen four ways African Americans used the gardens to their advantage, brainstorm an image that might represent each of these ways. One image for the above-mentioned example might be a quick sketch of a cabbage being exchanged between the boys and Jefferson. At the end of this challenge, you will have designed a poster with four images and four captions. One suggestion is that you divide your poster into quadrants before you begin designing!
4. Provide a caption that explains each of your images. This caption should paraphrase the portion of the article that explains how the garden provided choice or opportunity for African Americans at Monticello.
5. Title— be sure to name your digital image or the one that you plan on uploading. This can either be placed in the middle of the poster, or at the top— your choice!
6. Upload! If you have designed your poster by hand, be sure to take a picture of it. Send it to yourself by attaching it through email, and save it to a safe spot on your computer. Click the upload button after you’ve decided to take the challenge, and be sure that you can see your finished product!