



Fantastic Fact:

Twenty-five percent of an apple's volume is air which is why it floats!

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Visit our blog [#LearnAboutAg@Home](https://www.learnaboutag.org/blog) for daily activities to incorporate agriculture into your classroom, in person or virtually!



WHAT'S IN SEASON?



Farmer Spotlight

THOMAS BENZLER: BENZLER FARMING
FRESNO/SANGER, CA

Benzler Farms has been in the organic grape production business since 1953. Today, Thomas Benzler continues that legacy by managing 250 acres of table grapes, raisins, and citrus just outside Fresno city limits. "My grandmother was into a natural lifestyle, and we farmed that way too. When the county started taking applications for certified organic production, my grandmother and father were first in line," Benzler explained.

For Benzler, growing grapes is a year-round job. After the leaves drop in early January, Benzler and his crew vigorously prune the vines. "Everything we remove from the vines is mulched and incorporated back into the soil to improve soil health," Benzler said. In the spring, buds appear, shoots emerge and grow, and flowers begin to bloom. As the flowers die, tiny green berries appear. These will eventually grow and ripen into mature clusters of grapes.

While the grapes grow, Benzler's crew puts in countless hours to ensure consumers enjoy a high-quality product. They remove leaves around each cluster to improve airflow and reduce cosmetic imperfections, trim the bunch to eight inches in order to increase berry size, and strip a small ring of bark from the trunks—called girdling—to force nutrients from the vines and roots into the fruit. "All these practices help us produce a desirable product—a product moms and dads will put in their grocery cart," Benzler explained.

When grape berries achieve the correct size, sugar content, and color, clusters are harvested by hand. Harvest usually begins mid-July and continues until the end of October. At harvest, the clusters are trimmed and inspected, packed into cartons, stacked on pallets, and transported to a cold storage facility to quickly cool the grapes. "We pack everything in the field. Grapes are packed today, cooled tonight, and are on their way to the store tomorrow," said Benzler. "Everything's sold under the Benzler label, so we do our very best to keep customers happy." You can find Benzler's organic grapes in independently owned co-op grocery stores across the U.S. and Canada.

FOOD & FUEL

GRAPES PROVIDE UNIQUE health benefits



They are full of essential vitamins and a natural source of beneficial antioxidants.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF INCLUDING GRAPES IN YOUR DIET:

Healthy HEART

Polyphenols in grapes may help promote the relaxation of blood vessels to support healthy blood flow and pressure.

Strong BRAIN

Grapes are a natural source of flavonols, a compound associated with decreased risk of developing Alzheimer dementia.

Healthy SKIN

The vitamin C and antioxidants found in grapes can help revitalize your skin and make it less sensitive to sun damage.

ALL ABOUT GRAPES

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom has partnered with the Fresno Unified School District to help develop resources for students and teachers throughout the district to LearnAboutAg! This month's featured commodity is Grapes! Learn more using the poster and newsletter on our [website!](https://www.learnaboutag.org)



We are excited to announce a special opportunity for a six-month Taste and Teach program to serve educators that have been eager to participate in our Taste and Teach program, but do not have access to Raley's or Stater Bros grocery stores.

Fifty selected educators will receive a \$60 gift card to purchase featured California-grown commodities (fruits, vegetables and nuts!) each month beginning in November and ending in April.

Participants will also receive a binder full of helpful resources, including instructions on how to lead students in a taste test while meeting California Academic Standards. The program is open to California K-12 students and requires teachers to complete a pre- and post-test with their students.



Applications are due October 11

For more information and to apply, visit [HERE!](#)



STORY WRITING CONTEST

DEADLINE APPROACHING!

It's the final countdown...and we want your students' stories! Get the scoop below:

WHO: California students grades 3-8

WHAT: Stories, real or imagined, based on experiences or events relating to accurate information about California agriculture

WHEN: All stories due by November 1st

WHY: To get their name in lights! Or at least in print. Winning stories are published in our annual story book, *Imagine this...Stories Inspired by Agriculture*. State winners get an all expense paid trip, along with their teacher and two parents/guardians to the State Capitol for an awards ceremony that takes place during National Agriculture week.

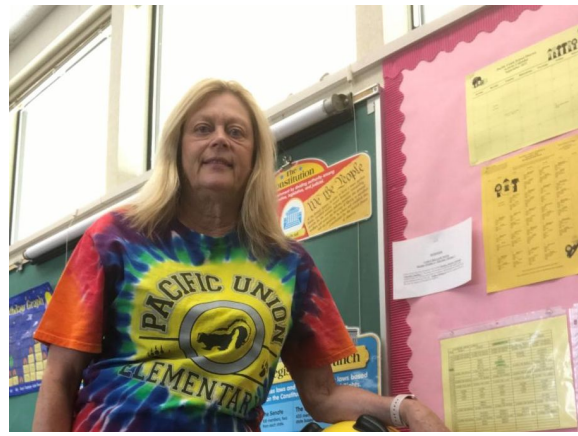
HOW: More information and [ENTRY FORM FOUND HERE!](#)

The *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest, can be used as an instructional tool, as a form of motivation to practice writing skills and as a way to use agricultural themes as a vehicle for teaching current California Academic Standards.

Imagine this...



Jane Hills
Grades taught: 5th
School: Pacific Union
Elementary School
County: Fresno County



How and when did you first learn about Ag in the Classroom?

It's been a long time! My sister told me about it and when I started teaching 25 years ago, there was a kindergarten teacher who used resources from Ag in the Classroom.

How long have you been teaching students about agriculture?

I have been around agriculture for a long time, as I grew up in Fresno County. It was natural for me to include agriculture in my early teaching and I continue to do so today.

What is your favorite AITC program/resource/event and why?

Too many to choose just one! I have used the Cream of the Crop newspaper, *Imagine this...* Story Writing Contest, taste testing, and Literacy for Life Grants. I have also used quite a few of the lessons over the course of the years.

Describe an agriculture-based project you have been involved in lately.

Last year I received a grant for Literacy for Life and used that to purchase germination trays, seeds, and soil for my students. Even with the pandemic and distance learning, we were able to get all the supplies to the students. They LOVED it! They really enjoyed watching their seeds germinate and planting them outside. It was great!

Do you have any advice for other teachers on how to implement agriculture into their classrooms?

Students love any of these hands-on activities. There is always something to learn and all the subjects can be connected to agriculture.

We have to ask, favorite California commodities?

That is a tough one! Having lived in the central valley for most of my life, I am used to an abundance of fruit and vegetables. A couple of my favorites are cucumbers and squash. I love to plant a big garden and grow these items.

Are you an educator including agriculture in your classroom?

Sign up to be a future Teacher Feature!

Please send an interest email to info@LearnAboutAg.org.

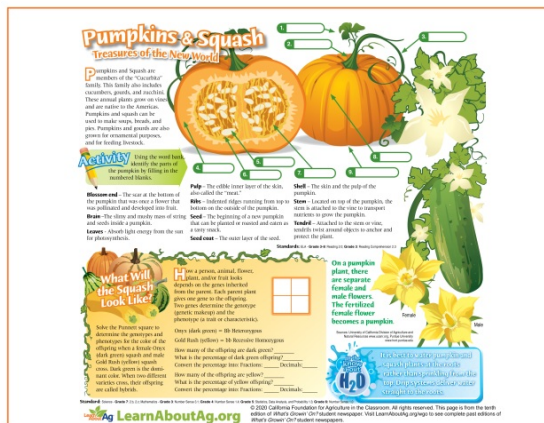
IT'S PUMPKIN TIME!

Long before pumpkin spice everything, scientists say there were seeds of plants related to the pumpkin. Pumpkins are technically a fruit and California is one of the top pumpkin producing states in the nation. Find other fascinating facts, pumpkin primers and a fun activity for students below!

[Case of the Missing Pumpkin](#)

(Grades K-2)

[Pumpkins and Squash Treasures of the New World](#) (Grades 3-7)



Grant Feature

The California Fertilizer Foundation Garden Grant Program is Back!

The California Fertilizer Foundation (CFF) has resumed its grant program after pausing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each year CFF awards 24 California schools with a \$1,200 Garden Grant to start or enhance a current garden program on the school's campus. Schools must have resumed in-person learning for at least one semester to be considered for the grant. The application deadline is October 31, 2021.

[Apply HERE!](#)



**California
Fertilizer
Foundation**



More Ways to LearnAboutAg®

First-ever National Conference Focused on School Gardens!

Save the date for a first of its kind conference! The Growing School Gardens Summit will take place in Denver, Colorado from April 22-25, 2022. Life Lab and Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation have partnered to host the event and encourage all who may be interested in leading a workshop or lightning talk at the Summit to apply now. More information and registration details can be found [HERE](#).



Community Events

For Educators

The California Science Education Experience

Event Location: Virtual

Event Dates:

- October 8-10, 2021

The California Association of Science Educators is hosting the California Science Education Experience. This virtual conference will provide professional learning for science educators to add to their classroom. AITC is participating in the Journey 2050 workshop on October 9th. Journey 2050 is a free STEM program to engage students in grades 6-12 on the issues and complexities of feeding the world's population in 2050 by balancing society, economic, and environmental factors. More information and details can be found, [here](#).

Scholarships for National Ag in the Classroom Conference

Event Dates:

- Apply by October 15th

Applications for White-Reinhardt Scholarships to the 2022 National Ag in the Classroom Conference in New York for full time educators and/or volunteers that actively participate in classroom ag literacy programs or events are now being accepted. Apply [here](#).

Bzzz! Bee Grants Deadline

Event Dates:

- Apply by October 15th

Whole Kids Foundation in partnership with the Bee Cause Project have opened up their Bee grant applications. These grant programs allow for schools and non-profit organizations to receive support for educational beehives and bee programming so students can observe bees up close and learn about the vital role these pollinators play in our food system. More information [here](#).

2021 Expanded Learning Opportunities with STEAM Back-To-School Pre-Conference/California STEAM Symposium

Event Location: Virtual

Event Dates:

- October 21-23, 2021

The California STEAM Symposium is co-hosting a virtual conference on October 21-23, 2021. This event will allow STEAM educators to collaborate with STEAM experts. More information can be found, [here](#).

Ventura County Farm Day

Event Location: Ventura County

Event Date:

- November 6, 2021

Save the date for the ninth annual Ventura County Farm Day, presented by **SEEAG!** Enjoy free activities and agricultural tours hosted at a variety of different farms, ranches, and agricultural organizations across the county. More information to come, [here](#).

Cal Water H2O Challenge
Event Location: Throughout California, Classrooms grades 4-6.
Register by:
November 30, 2021

Cal Water H2O Challenge's Classroom Challenge is a project-based, environmentally-focused competition for classrooms. Register for the Classroom Challenge by November 30, 2021 and you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a \$500 grant to help your classroom with your project. Register [here](#).

For Students

Imagine this...Story Writing Contest
Deadline:

- November 1, 2021

Students grades 3-8 write narratives, real or imagined, based on experiences or events relating to accurate information about California agriculture.

Monterey County Agricultural Education Farm Day
Event Location: Salinas, Ca
Event Dates:

- November 3-4, 2021

The Farm Day Experience provides basic, current facts about the agricultural industry in Monterey county, gives students and teachers the opportunity to become familiar with food production, and makes the important, personal contact with farming that has been lost through increased urbanization. It also gives those involved in agriculture a chance to interact with the enthusiastic and interested children – and adults.

San Joaquin County AgVenture
Event Location: Manteca, Ca
Event Dates:

- November 4, 2021

San Joaquin County AgVenture is an agriculture and nutrition education program for 3rd graders in San Joaquin County. Each student has the opportunity to attend one of three FREE AgVenture events throughout San Joaquin County based on their school location where they will learn about local agriculture, nutrition, water and soil and so much more. For more information contact sjcagventure@yahoo.com.

Agribee™ Agricultural Spelling Bee
Event Location: Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, Tehama and Yuba Counties
Event Dates:

- November 19, 2021

Butte County Farm Bureau's Agribee™ Contest is back! The Agribee is a define and spell bee, using agriculturally related words, for fourth and fifth grade students. The program is currently available to schools in Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, Tehama, and Yuba Counties in California. Each participating school organizes a school-wide Agribee and identifies two finalists who compete in a Agribee Finals. The Agribee Final Contest first-place student will receive a laptop computer and a special, agriculture

focused field trip for the student's class. Each Agribee participant is commended for their hard work and receives a t-shirt and certificate. Agribee Finals will be held on Friday, November 19th. To register a class to participate in Agribee 2021 please visit: [Agribee-Butte County Farm Bureau \(buttefarmbureau.com\)](https://buttefarmbureau.com)



Show Your Support for Agricultural Literacy

Help us continue providing programs and materials that create an awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students. Make a **donation** today!

Stay Connected! @LearnAboutAg

