



..... THIS MONTH
WE'RE HARVESTING

Berries!

In This Issue



AND MORE!



MAY

NEWSLETTER

Farmer Spotlight

SHARON WEAVER - SUMNER PECK RANCH
FRIANT, CA

When Sharon Weaver became Executive Director of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust in 2015, she didn't know farming was on the horizon. "The trust works with public and private landowners to acquire land for the San Joaquin River Parkway," Weaver said. The organization acquired 76-acre Sumner Peck Ranch in December 2020. "It's a really key property on the river that includes a half-mile of river frontage and wildlife habitat. I've always had a personal interest in farming, but this is the first farm our organization has owned." The trust's board of directors decided to continue farming the established crops on the property, which includes 25 acres of wine grapes, two acres of citrus, and two acres of blueberries.



Blueberries are a permanent crop that can bear fruit for up to 50 years. "Blueberries need healthy soil, plenty of water, and good drainage," Weaver explained. Blueberries grow on deciduous bushes that can reach 5- to 8-feet high at maturity.

In March, clusters of white blossoms pop up all over the bushes and bee boxes are brought in to pollinate the crop. In April, each blossom becomes a berry—first hard and green, then reddish purple, and finally blue. As the berries grow, each plant is drip-irrigated with water pumped from the San Joaquin River. The blueberries at Sumner Peck Ranch are planted in dense rows—so dense that a tractor can't access the field without damaging the plants. "We rely on string trimmers for weed control. We are moving toward sustainability, which means more mowing and fewer chemical controls," Weaver shared.

Berry color, size, plumpness, and sweetness are all signs harvest is ready to begin. Harvest typically begins in mid-May and lasts approximately four weeks. Labor costs can be high when it comes to harvesting blueberries, but at Sumner Peck Ranch customers pick their own fruit. During harvest, customers can fill their buckets to the brim Friday through Monday from 8:30am to 4:00pm. For Weaver, harvest time is all about connecting with the community. "I'm excited about this project because it's a new and different way for people to interact with land along the parkway. Everyone can enjoy the beautiful San Joaquin River."

FOOD for FUEL



Berries provide health benefits. They are full of essential vitamins and a natural source of beneficial antioxidants.

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

Strong BONES

Blueberries are an excellent source of manganese—one 100 gram serving contains 25% of your daily needs. This nutrient is essential for bone health, including bone development and maintenance.

Radiant SKIN

Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, with one cup providing more than 100 percent of the recommended daily value. Vitamin C helps protect our body's cells from sun damage while improving skin elasticity and tone.

Happy GUT

The fiber content of blackberries makes them a great supplement for a healthy digestive tract—just one cup contains 8 grams of fiber.



BERRY PATRIOTIC SNACK PLATTER



Build the perfect snack platter to enjoy during upcoming patriotic holidays, such as Memorial Day (May) or Independence Day (July). Berries are a great source of vitamins and antioxidants, while string cheese has high levels of calcium, vitamin D, and protein. With only three ingredients and simple assembly, kids of all ages will enjoy making a special tribute to our nation.

Ingredients:

- 5-6 string cheese sticks (or bananas)
- 1 pound strawberries
- 1 cup blueberries

Plus: Rectangular cutting board or platter

(Adapted from momendeavors.com)

Directions:

1. Wash your produce under running water. Pat dry with a clean towel.
2. Arrange blueberries in a small rectangle in the upper-left corner of the platter.
3. Cut strawberries into 1-inch pieces. Slice string cheese sticks into ¼-inch rounds.
4. Arrange some strawberries in a row at the top of the platter. Arrange some string cheese in a row under the row of strawberries. Continue alternating rows of strawberries and string cheese until the entire platter is covered with alternating red and white “stripes.”
5. Enjoy with family and friends!

CLASSROOM ★ Connection ★

Jamberry Jamboree

poem, that invites students to interpret, imagine, and be silly. In this lesson, students will read and respond to the book *Jamberry*, celebrating the many different berries that make up a “jam jamboree!”

Materials: Basket of berries, worksheet (page 3), writing paper with picture box (optional), markers or crayons (optional)

Procedure:

1. Show students a basket of berries. Ask them, “Have you ever picked your own berries?” Invite students to share about their experience picking berries. Ask, “What are some things you can make with berries?” Allow time for students to share.
2. Display the book *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen. Introduce the story by discussing the title, cover, and author. Ask the students to make predictions regarding what they think the story might be about.
3. Read the story aloud to the students using appropriate inflection and tone. Pause and ask the students to describe what the illustrations show and identify how it relates to the text.
4. Conclude the reading by inviting students to share their reactions and comments. Review the elements of a story: characters, settings, and main events. Distribute the worksheet on page 3. Allow time for students to complete the worksheet. Review student responses.
5. Advanced students can create their own page of rhyming text about berries to complement the theme of the book. Distribute writing paper and crayons or markers. Display the finished pages in the classroom.

Objectives

With teacher support, students will read the book *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen. Students will respond to the story by identifying characters, settings, and major events. Advanced students will write and illustrate their own page of rhyming text about berries to complement the theme of the book.

Standards: CC ELA: RL.K.3, RL.K.7, RL.K.10, RL.1.3, RL.1.7, W.2.7, L.3.3, L.4.3

Jamberry Jamboree

Identify the following story elements. Draw or write your responses.

CHARACTERS

Who is the story about?

SETTING

Where does the story take place?

MAIN EVENTS

What exciting things happen in the story?

Draw your favorite berry
from the book.



EXTRA CHALLENGE:

Make your own page to add to the book. Include at least four lines of rhyming text about berries.

Illustrate your writing with artwork.

virtual



Nicole Jolly from True Food TV, takes viewers to a cranberry farm in Southern New Jersey to discover how cranberries grow. What might be even more fascinating is how they're harvested—in flooded sunken fields called bogs. The Leigh Brothers, seventh generation cranberry farmers, share how managing water resources is an essential part of cranberry production.



DIG DEEPER

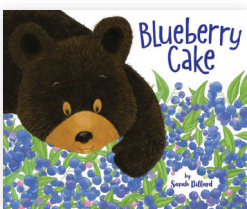
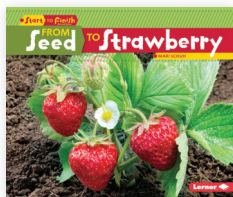
These books, websites, and other resources will help you and your students learn more about berries.

BOOKS

From Seed to Strawberry

by Mari Schuh

How does a tiny seed grow into a sweet, juicy strawberry? In this nonfiction book featuring vivid photographs, readers will follow each step in the cycle from planting seeds to eating delicious strawberries.



Blueberry Cake

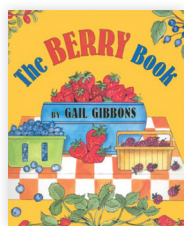
by Sarah Dillard

There's nothing Little Bear loves more than delicious, delectable blueberries. When Little Bear goes to pick berries so Mama can fix him a treat, he just can't resist eating them all! Includes a kid-friendly recipe for blueberry cake.

The Berry Book

by Gail Gibbons

This picture book describes many types of berries, edible and poisonous; explains how several varieties are cultivated, harvested, and used; and includes recipes for blueberry pie, blackberry jam, and raspberry ice cream.



WEBSITES

learnaboutag.org

The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom provides free resources to teachers. The resources highlight many of California's 400 agricultural commodities, including berries.

californiastrawberries.com

The California Strawberry Commission's website introduces consumers to berry growers through their online video series, Farmer Stories. The website also features information about health and wellness, how strawberries are grown, and nutritious recipes.

RESOURCES

Activity: Strawberry pHun! Ag-Bite (Grades 6-8)

By California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

This resource features a "bite-sized" activity about strawberries. Students will learn more about the pH scale by creating a berry puree and measuring the pH of strawberries. Includes additional classroom activities for nutrition, science, and math.

Lesson Plans: Harvest Lessons: Berries (Grades K-4)

By Vermont Harvest of the Month

This unit includes eight different activities to help students learn more about berries. Featured activities focus on everything from pollination and economics to comparing wild and cultivated berries and recipe testing.

Resource: Strawberry Ag Mag (Grades 3-8)

By North Carolina Farm Bureau of Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, Inc.

In this Ag Mag issue, students learn about the history of the strawberry, hybridization, the life cycle and anatomy of the strawberry plant, careers, and more.

