



..... THIS MONTH
WE'RE HARVESTING

Pears!

In This Issue



AND MORE!



FALL

NEWSLETTER

Farmer Spotlight

SUSAN LAGRANDE - ROBERT GAYALDO FARM
FINLEY, CA



From blossom to harvest, growing pears is a year-round process. Susan LaGrande is part of Robert Gayaldo Farms in Lake County, California, where she helps with pear production while also managing the farm's business operations.

LaGrande comes from a farming family that raises rice, cattle, almonds, and other crops, so she is familiar with the hard work and rewards of farm life. "It's really hard work to farm pears. They're a very delicate crop, and almost everything requires hand labor," LaGrande says.

Pears are considered a permanent crop, meaning the trees remain in the orchard for many years and can produce fruit for generations. At Robert Gayaldo Farms, some pear trees were planted in the 1940s and are still producing today. That long-term commitment starts with caring for the trees year after year.

Pear production begins in winter, when trees are pruned to maintain their health and productivity. As temperatures rise in March and April, the trees' flower buds swell and open. Bartlett pears are self-pollinating, so growers do not need to bring in bees to transfer pollen between trees. Spring also brings the risk of frost, which can damage blossoms and the developing fruit. LaGrande and her family watch temperatures

closely, mowing the grass in the orchard and using wind machines to mix warmer air into the orchard when temperatures drop low enough to threaten the trees.

As the fruit develops, orchard workers monitor the trees for pests and diseases, including pear scab, insects, and blight. They also carefully manage irrigation to provide the trees with water as the pears grow. By late summer, the fruit is ready for harvest.

Harvest typically begins in August and lasts two to three weeks. For LaGrande, late summer is her favorite time in the orchard. "A lot of the work is complete, and you're out there looking at the trees and the fruit, watching it grow and seeing when it's ready to harvest," she says. "The hardest work is done."

Workers pick pears by hand, using tall ladders to reach fruit throughout the trees. They carefully select fruit based on size and place the pears into picking bags before gently emptying them into large bins. A specialized bin carrier transports six bins at a time to the loading area, where they are loaded onto trucks.

From the orchard, the pears travel to a processing facility, where they are canned as pear halves and slices or used in products such as fruit cocktail. These products make their way to grocery store shelves, allowing consumers to enjoy California pears year-round.

FOOD for FUEL



Every juicy bite of a pear contains nutrients your body needs to grow, move, and stay healthy.

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

Happy GUT

The fiber in pears helps support healthy digestion and can help you feel full longer after eating.

Body DEFENDER

Vitamin C helps your body heal, supports healthy skin, and helps keep your immune system strong.

Heart HELPER

Potassium works behind the scenes to help your heart beat regularly and keep your muscles working smoothly.



PEAR HEDGEHOG

Pears and hedgehogs have something in common: both are native to parts of Europe and Asia. Pears come in many shapes, sizes, and colors, making them a fun fruit to explore. In this activity, students will create an edible pear hedgehog while observing the pear's shape, texture, and parts.

Ingredients:

- A small pear
- 1 cup grapes, any color
- 1 small blueberry
- 2 mini chocolate chips

Tools:

Vegetable peeler,
toothpicks, small knife

Always check student information, especially allergies, before preparing or serving food to keep everyone safe.

(Adapted from helloyummy.co)

Directions:

1. Wash and dry the fresh produce.
2. With an adult's help, use a vegetable peeler to remove the skin from the top of the pear to create the hedgehog's face.
3. Carefully slice a small amount from the side of the pear so it sits flat on the plate.
4. Trim the pear stem and place a blueberry on the end to make the hedgehog's nose.
5. Add two mini chocolate chips for the eyes.
6. Carefully insert toothpicks around the skin-covered portion of the pear. Add grapes to the toothpicks to create the hedgehog's quills.
7. Enjoy your edible pear hedgehog!



CLASSROOM Connection

Pears are often picked before they are fully ripe, allowing them to be stored and transported before they are ready to eat. Once picked, many pears continue to ripen, but storage conditions can affect how quickly it happens. In this inquiry-based activity, students will design and conduct a fair test to investigate which conditions help pears ripen faster.

Objectives:

Students will design and conduct a fair test to investigate factors that affect pear ripening, collect and record observations, and use evidence from their data to explain which method resulted in faster ripening.

California Standards: NGSS: 3-5-ETS1-3; CC ELA: W.4-5.7, W.4-5.9

The Pear Ripening Challenge

Materials: Worksheet (page 3), pears of the same variety and similar ripeness (one per student or student group), paper bags, bananas or apples, plates or trays, pencils, ruler or scale for collecting additional data (optional)

Procedure:

1. Show students a firm, unripe pear and ask: "How could we make this pear ripen faster?" Introduce the question: Which method will help a pear ripen the fastest? Explain that pears produce ethylene, a natural plant hormone that helps fruit ripen. Fruit such as apples and bananas also produce ethylene, which can increase ripening when fruit is kept together in a closed space.
2. Discuss possible methods students could test, such as leaving a pear on the counter, placing it near a window, placing it in a paper bag, or placing it in a paper bag with an apple or banana.
3. Ask: "What is the one condition that you will change?" Emphasize that in a fair test, students change only one condition, called the variable, while keeping all other conditions the same.
4. Distribute the worksheet. Have students choose or design a method, make a prediction, identify the variable they will change, and list the conditions they will keep the same.
5. Have students begin their experiments. Each day, students observe the pears and record changes in firmness, color, smell, and appearance. If appropriate, students can gently press near the neck of the pear to check for softening.
6. After several days, have students compare their observations and determine which method helped the pear ripen fastest. Students should use evidence from their data to support their conclusion.
7. Discuss the results as a class. Ask: "What would you change if you repeated the experiment? What would you test next?"



Name: _____

A farmer harvests pears while they are still firm so they can be stored and transported. But what happens when you bring a firm pear home? Can you help it ripen faster? Design an experiment to test different ripening methods and use your observations to find out what works best.

MAKE A PREDICTION

If I place the pear _____,
then _____.

DESIGN YOUR TEST

A variable is something that can change in an experiment. To make a fair test, change one variable and keep other conditions the same.

My ripening method: _____ What is one variable will I change? _____

What will I keep the same? _____

RECORD YOUR OBSERVATIONS

DAY	FIRMNESS					COLOR	SMELL	OTHER CHANGES
1	Very Soft 1	2	3	4	Very Firm 5			
2	1	2	3	4	5			
3	1	2	3	4	5			
4	1	2	3	4	5			
5	1	2	3	4	5			
6	1	2	3	4	5			

CONCLUSION

Did your results support your prediction? Why or why not?

Compare your results with the class. Which method appeared to help pears ripen fastest?

What evidence from the class results supports your answer?

THINK LIKE A SCIENTIST

If you repeated this experiment, what would you change or test next?

virtual

FIELD TRIP

This video takes viewers to a pear farm in Courtland, California, where local pear farmer Topher Chan shares how pears are grown, harvested, and cared for throughout the season. Joined by pear fan and urban farmer Kyle Hagerty, Topher gives a behind-the-scenes look at pear production.



Watch Video

DIG DEEPER

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

BOOKS



The Very Oldest Pear Tree

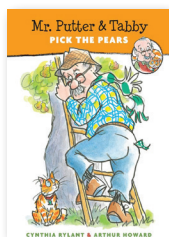
by Nancy I. Sanders (Grades PreK-3)

A beautifully illustrated historical picture book based on the real-life Endicott Pear Tree planted in Massachusetts in the 1630s, highlighting resilience and history.

Mr. Putter & Tabby Pick the Pears

by Cynthia Rylant (Grades 1-3)

A gentle, funny chapter book about an older man, his cat, and a pear-picking adventure that requires some clever problem-solving.



Are We Pears Yet?

by Miranda Paul
(Grades PreK-3)

Staged entirely as a play, this clever, funny book follows two impatient seeds waiting to grow into pears. It is a great, engaging way to teach children about patience and plant growth cycles.

WEBSITES

calpear.com

Showcasing the flavor and benefits of California-grown pears, this site offers nutrition information, recipes, and educational resources for all ages. Visitors can explore different pear varieties, learn how pears are grown and harvested, and discover their health benefits.

learnaboutag.org

The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom provides free resources to teachers. The resources highlight many of California's 350 agricultural commodities, including pears.

usapears.org

Dedicated to helping consumers learn about pears, USA Pears offers information on pear varieties, nutrition, ripening, storage, and recipes. Visitors can explore the unique characteristics of different pear types, discover the health benefits of pears, and find tips for selecting and enjoying pears.

RESOURCES

Lesson Plan: Pairing Up With Pears (Grades 1-3)

By Oklahoma Agriculture in the Classroom

In this lesson, students explore pears through creative writing, sensory activities, graphing, and a traditional folk tale. Students learn about pear varieties while using descriptive language, analyzing data, and exploring the cultural history of pears.

Science Project: Tree Fruits Flowchart (Grade 6-12)

By National Center for Agricultural Literacy

This three-page informational poster explores how tree fruits, including pears, are grown, harvested, and transported from the farm to the store. Students can follow the journey of pears from the orchard to the consumer while learning about production practices and nutrition.



A Teacher's Guide to Farm to School Partnerships

Great things happen when classrooms and cafeterias work together! Discover resources and a special guide packed with creative ideas for partnering with your school nutrition program.

Download today at learnaboutag.org/farmtoschool