



..... THIS MONTH
WE'RE HARVESTING
Grapes!

In This Issue

PLAY
with your
Food

CLASSROOM
★ **Connection** ★

virtual
FIELD TRIP

— AND MORE! —

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 for 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.



GRAPE ENGINEERING

Building structures with grapes is a fun, interactive way to strengthen STEM skills. During the construction process, students learn the importance of a well-planned design, altering plans in light of failures, acquiring the right materials, and basic engineering skills. The best part? The finished product doubles as a healthy snack!

Ingredients:

- A bunch of grapes, washed and separated from the stem
- 20+ toothpicks



Challenge Ideas:

Novice

- Build a 2-D shape. Properly name it.
- Construct a robot. Describe what it can do.
- Make an animal. Describe its habitat.
- Create an insect. Name its parts.
- Construct a house. Measure it.

Advanced

- Build a 3-D shape. Properly name it.
- Create the tallest free-standing structure you can. Measure it.
- Build a bridge between two objects.
- Build a structure that can support the weight of a book.
- Build a 3-D shape with seven faces.



The Fox and the Grapes

artwork depict grape clusters. It's no wonder that Aesop wrote at least one fable celebrating the delicious fruit.

Materials: "The Fox and the Grapes" (available online from the Library of Congress, read.gov/aesop), student worksheet (page 3)

Aesop's Fables are a collection of stories designed to teach moral lessons credited to Aesop, a Greek slave and storyteller thought to have lived between 620 and 560 BCE. Grapes had an important place in ancient Greek culture—both coins and pieces of

Objectives:

Students will identify characteristics of fables; demonstrate comprehension of "The Fox and the Grapes"; and explain the moral of the fable in their own words.

California Standards:

CC ELA: RL 1-8.1; RL 1-7.2; RL 1-4.3

Procedure:

1. Make a list of well-known fables: "The Tortoise and the Hare," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," "Belling the Cat." Enlist students to help identify the three characteristics of a fable: fables are short; fables have a moral lesson; and fables often have animal characters that act like people.
2. Tell students that today they will hear a fable that has all three characteristics. The fable is called "The Fox and the Grapes."
3. Read the fable together. Stop and decode any words that might challenge students, such as "longingly," "gaping," and "scornfully."
4. Have students complete the student worksheet on page 3 to demonstrate comprehension. Review students' responses.
5. Traditionally, fables are written to teach children their culture's appropriate behavior and values. The moral of this fable is, "You shouldn't speak badly about something that you once wanted, just because you can't have it." Ask students. "Is this an important lesson for our culture today? Why or why not?"

The Fox and the Grapes

1. Is the "Fox and the Grapes" a fable? How do you know? _____

2. Personification is when animals act like people. What evidence of personification can you find in the story? _____

3. Why did the fox jump for the grapes? _____

4. Why does the fox walk away with his nose to the air and call the grapes sour? _____

5. If you were the fox, how could you have successfully plucked the grapes from the vine?

Draw a picture to show your strategy



6. All fables are meant to teach a moral lesson about how to behave. What is the moral of this story? Write it in your own words. _____

Did you know?

Wild grapes have woody vines which can climb over thirty feet tall! In forests, it is not uncommon to see these large vines climbing up the trunks of trees.



virtual

FIELD TRIP

Cotton Candy grapes might sound like something from Willy Wonka's imagination, but there's nothing fictional about these sweet fruits!

This video, produced by California Bountiful, takes you on a trip to a California vineyard to learn about several unusual—and delicious—grape varieties.



SCAN ME

DIG DEEPER

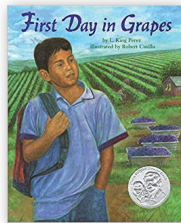
These books, websites, and other resources will help you and your students learn more about grapes.

BOOKS

First Day in Grapes

by L. King Pérez and
illustrated by Robert Casilla

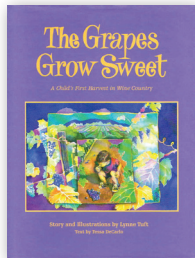
Chico and his family move up and down the state of California following the harvest seasons. Each September, during grape harvest, Chico enrolls at a new school and faces new challenges. The year Chico begins third grade, however, proves to be different.



The Grapes Grow Sweet: A Child's First Family Grape Harvest

by Lynne Tuft

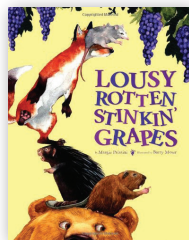
For the first time, four-year-old Julian is old enough to take part in the grape harvest on his family's vineyard. Through Julian's eyes, this book offers a captivating glimpse of growing up on a family vineyard.



Lousy Rotten Stinkin' Grapes

written by Margie Palatini and
illustrated by Barry Moser

Fox is undoubtedly sly, clever, and crafty, but can he come up with a plan to reach the grapes? In this humorous spin on a well-known fable, Fox tries to enlist the help of all the forest animals in his quest for a tasty treat.



WEBSITES

grapesfromcalifornia.com

The California Table Grape Commission website provides additional information about how grapes are produced in the Golden State. The site highlights grape facts, health information, and recipes. Consumers will enjoy featured videos about grapes.

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 grapes.

RESOURCES

Resource: Farm to You – Table Grapes (Grades 3-5)

By California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

Explore the journey of table grapes from the farm to you. This resource illustrates the farm to you process while including two unique lesson plans related to grape production.

Lesson Plans: Grapes in the Classroom (Grades 1-5)

By The California Table Grape Commission

This set of five lessons incorporates grapes into Math, English Language Arts, and Visual Arts. These simple lessons provide a basic introduction to grapes for young students.

Resources: Grapes for Schools (Grades K-8)

By HMC Farms

HMC Farms offers educational resources that teach kids all about grapes. Parents and teachers can download activities such as mazes and word searches, as well as classroom lesson plans and educational videos.

