

The Tomato Trek

The Journey to California

The first tomatoes can be traced to the South American Andes Mountains where they grew wild as cherry-sized berries. Padres following the Spanish conquistadors likely sent the first seeds to Spain in the early 1500s. The fruit gained little attention in Spain, but soon traveled to Italy—a country that embraced tomatoes with great passion. By the mid-sixteenth century, English colonists brought tomatoes back to the Americas, settling in the northeastern part of the country. Tomatoes likely reached California by the late 1700s, as Spanish missions were established throughout the state.



Tomatoes on Trial

In 1893, the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case to determine whether the tomato was a fruit or a vegetable. In the case of “Nix v. Hedden,” the tomato was declared a vegetable, along with cucumbers, squash, beans, and peas.

Use the historical report from the trial (case.law.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=149&invo=304) to record at least three arguments as to why tomatoes should be classified as a fruit or a vegetable. Use your findings to support your stance in an oral debate.

The Great Debate

Fruit	Vegetable
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Standards: Science—Grade 3: 5b; Grade 7: 5f; ELA—Grade 3: Reading Informational Text (RIT) 2, Writing 1b, Speaking and Listening (SL) 1; Grade 4: RIT 2, Writing 1b, SL 1; Grade 5: RIT 2, Writing 1b, SL 1; Grade 6: 1b, SL 1; Grade 7: 1b, SL 1; Grade 8: 1b, SL 1; History-Social Science—Grades 6-8: Research, Evidence, and Point of View 3, 4; Historical Interpretation 2, 3

Sources: California Tomato Growers Association (www.ctga.org)



Activity

Draw arrows to track the tomato's journey from its origin to California.

Standards: ELA—Grades 6-8: Reading Informational Text 3, 7; History-Social Science—Grades K-5: Chronological and Spatial Thinking 1, 4; Grades 6-8: 1, 3

Tomato Vine Timeline

Use the information on this page to create a timeline featuring significant events in tomato history. Include the date and description of each event, in chronological order.

Standards: ELA—Grades 3-5: Reading Informational Text 9; Grades 6-8: Reading Informational Text 9; History-Social Science—Grades 6-8: Chronological and Spatial Thinking 2

Did You Know?

The mechanical tomato harvester was developed in California in the 1950s.