

2025 Wisconsin AITC Essay Contest

5th Grade State Winner

Tree-mendous Treasures: Food and Fiber from the Forest

by Adalyn Howe, Columbia County

Have you ever hugged a tree? I have, not only because I love nature, but because trees have become a meaningful part of my life. I still remember planting my very first fruit tree in my family's orchard, which has since grown to over thirty fruit trees! I still look forward to every spring that we tap maple trees for sap, that we then turn into delicious maple syrup! Winter memories are made when we find “the most perfect Christmas tree!” Trees are so much more than part of nature—they grow into our lives and shape our stories.

Visiting our orchard, filled with apple, cherry, peach, pear, and plum trees, is a magical experience. The smell of spring blossoms, the joy of harvesting fruit, and the satisfaction of turning that fruit into food brings so much happiness. We can make apple and pear sauce, preserve peaches, and make cherry and plum jam. Thanks to these trees, we enjoy homemade food all year round. It's amazing how trees use sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to create the foods and fibers we depend on through photosynthesis, (U.S. Forest Service) it feels like magic, but it's really science!

Every spring, during “maple syrup season,” my family taps sugar maples and collects sap. It's crazy to think that forty gallons of sap make just one gallon of syrup (University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension)! After hours of boiling, tasting that warm syrup on pancakes is incredibly rewarding. I'm always grateful for the trees and the joy they bring.

Trees also give us fiber. They supply materials for things like paper, clothing, furniture, and books. Rayon clothing is also made from wood pulp. Did you know that

the average American uses over 700 pounds of paper per year (Wisconsin DNR)? I never realized how much we rely on trees.

I love my family's tradition of going to the local tree farm to pick out “the most perfect Christmas tree ever!” Cutting it down and taking it home and having the fresh pine scent fill the air, then putting on the tinsel and ornaments. Real Christmas trees making memories that last a lifetime.

Trees do even more. They produce oxygen and remove harmful carbon dioxide, (CO₂) one large tree can remove 48 pounds of CO₂ each year! (U.S. Forest Service) Fallen trees become homes for animals. Dead wood can be used to make benches, furniture, or fuel for bonfires—perfect for roasting s'mores. Of course, it's important to plant new trees to replace the old ones.

Trees aren't just a part of my family's story, they give us all something; food, fiber, clean air, and unforgettable memories, the opportunities are endless. Trees are treasures, I'm proud to be surrounded by them growing up. It's important to take care of them, too! After all what other friend gives you tasty syrup and memories! Everybody should love a tree and appreciate all that they give.



I am collecting food from my Sugar Maple Trees. I start by tapping the tree. Sap will eventually flow. I will then boil it to remove excess water, and in the end of delicious maple syrup!



Planting trees helps the earth and people by removing carbon dioxide and replacing it with oxygen (U.S. Forest Service). Make sure you plant trees to continue to survive!



Real Wisconsin Christmas trees are one of the best ways to celebrate your holidays. Afterwards you can still use the tree for fish habitats, fuel and bird habitats.



I enjoy making memories picking apples and fruit to make delicious sauces, jams, and pies. Trees provide a variety of food to help me grow and stay healthy!

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