



PEAR TALKING POINTS

2. A slice of history about the Pear

- Pears have been grown for a long time. France and Belgium were the first to grow pears as a crop that they harvested. Pears were valued for their flavor, texture and long storage life.
- As people moved throughout Europe the pear traveled as well, eventually colonist that left England planted many pears in the Eastern part of the United States. However, in the 1800s a crop blight, a disease that kills the plants, hit the Eastern orchards so the unaffected trees were transplanted to the Pacific Northwest. This is where they trees have been grown since.

3. & 4. How do Pears grow?

- During the growing season, pear orchards need the ideal warm days and cool nights that are found in California, Oregon and Washington regions.
- Pears need a location with good air circulation where the ground is slightly elevated and sloping because the trees bloom early and the flowers may be damaged in the spring by frosty air, which settles in low-lying areas. Pears should be grown in heavier soil types and will not survive on ground that is saturated with water.
- The pear tree has glossy leaves and white flowers grouped in corymbs, which are pollinated to become the edible fruit. In early spring, bees help the pear trees pollinate from flower to flower on the different pear trees.
- The California pear harvest begins in mid-July and continues through

September. Pears do not ripen properly on the tree so growers pick the fruit when it is mature but green. Pears are harvested by hand, placed into bins and transported to a packing house. The pears are graded for quality, sorted by size and packed for the fresh market or sent to a processing facility. Next, pears are cooled to slow down the ripening process. To initiate ripening, pears need to be brought to room temperature.



- Here's a surprise: Pears are picked unripe and left to ripen in a cool, dry, dark place (like a basement or garage). If you wait for them to ripen on the tree, you probably won't harvest many - they'll rot and be attacked by bugs and birds

5. Why should we eat Pears?

- An excellent source of dietary *fiber*, 41 percent in the form of pectin, which helps sustain blood sugar levels and promotes bowel regularity. Most of the fiber is found in the skin of the pear.
- A good source of *Vitamin C*. It is essential for metabolism, healing and guarding against infectious diseases.
- A good source of *potassium*, an element lost easily in children due to their active lifestyles.

6. How do you pick a good Pear?

- The Bartlett pear variety is America's favorite pear.
- Pears ripen better off the tree and from the inside out.
- Pears are processed into canned pears, fruit cocktail, juice concentrate, baby food products, and are often dried.
- Because pears ripen from the inside out, pears that are soft around the middle may be over ripe and not as good as another one.
- One medium pear is equal to about one cup of fruit. One cup of pears is an excellent source of fiber, which helps you feel full, keep normal blood sugar levels, and avoid constipation
- Fruits and vegetables come in a rainbow of colors. Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day — red, yellow/orange, white, green and blue/purple.
- Pears can be red, yellow, brown (white color group) or green.
- The fruit can be ripened on the tree, but for better quality, they are best picked early and allowed to ripen indoors. Pears have a characteristically gritty texture caused by cells in the meat called stone cells. Although modern varieties have fewer of these stone cells, all varieties still contain them. Picking the pears before they have matured and holding them under cool controlled conditions prevents the formation of too many stone cells, and results in a less gritty pear!

Pear Picking tips

- **Attached to the tree:** Pears are best picked when the fruit separates easily from the twigs. If it is hard to pull off the tree, it isn't ready!
- **Texture:** A pear ready to be picked should have a feeling of springiness

to its flesh. Close your hand around one and squeeze. If it feels absolutely rock hard, it's still not ready. You should be able to detect a slight feeling of give, but not too much.

- **Drops:** when healthy fruits begin to drop, the others on the tree are ready;
- **Color:** there is a change in fruit color from green to yellow; and the stem separates easily from the branch. To pick pears, grasp the fruit firmly and twist or roll it to make the stem separate from the tree.
- **Asian pears**, unlike European pears, should be allowed to ripen on the tree. They need no after-ripening storage period. Asian pears are ready for harvest when they come away easily from the spur or branch when they are lifted and twisted slightly. Use the taste test; they're ready when they taste good. Asian pears should be crisp and crunchy when eaten.

Fun Facts

Healthy Serving Ideas

- Add sliced pears to green salads for a sweet crunch.
- Toss chopped pears, onions, bell peppers, and mangos with a touch of cilantro and lime juice. Serve with baked corn chips for a quick salsa your kids will love.
- Cut pear in half and scoop out stem and core. Fill with yogurt and top with granola.

So let's say you're going to a pear farm to pick your very own pears. Here are some hints to consider before you begin your picking of the pear tree.

Types of Pears

Although there are 3,000 varieties of pears, there are four that are the most popular in the United States.

Bartlett Pears

- Shaped like a bell.
- Change from yellow to green when ripe.
- Good for eating fresh because they are sweet and juicy.
- Available from July to December.

Anjou Pears

- Oval shaped with a thin outer skin.
- Light green in color.
- Good for eating fresh.
- Available between October and June.

Bosc Pears

- These pears have a long neck and rough outer skin.
- Cinnamon brown in color.
- Good for baking.
- Available from August to May.

Comice Pears

- Round in shape with a short neck.
- Greenish-yellow in color.
- Good for eating fresh.
- Available from August through April.

Examples/suggested Pear teaching points Grades K-2 (as time permits)

- People have been growing pear trees for a very, very long time. They date back to ancient times.
- Pears can be red, yellow, brown or green.
- Pears have seeds: they are fruits.
- Pears grow on beautiful trees with green leaves.
- Most tree fruit tastes best when it ripens on the tree but pears taste best when they ripen off the tree.
- Red fruits and vegetables help your heart stay healthy. They also help

you remember things like where you put your shoes or the answer to the math question.

- Pears are a good source of vitamin C. They are not a good source of protein.
- Vitamin C helps your body fight off germs that make you sick. Vitamin C also helps keep your bones together.
- The Bartlett pear is the favorite pear in America.
- California is #1 for growing Bartlett pears.
- Pears are best for you when eaten with the peel.
- There are 3000 different varieties of pears in the world.
- Pears like the warm days and cool nights found in Oregon, California and Washington.

Examples/suggested Pear teaching points Grades 3-5 (as time permits)

- People have been growing pear trees since ancient times. The Romans developed more than 50 varieties of pears.
- Early Americans brought pear seedlings across the Atlantic to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- The Bartlett Pear is the favorite pear in America. The Bartlett pear was developed in England by a man named John Stair in the 17th century.
- California is #1 for growing Bartlett pears and #2 in pear production, growing 32% of all pears grown in the United States.
- Pears can be red, yellow, brown or green.
- Pears have seeds: they are fruits.
- Pears are an excellent source of fiber. Fiber is the part of the plant your body cannot digest.

