

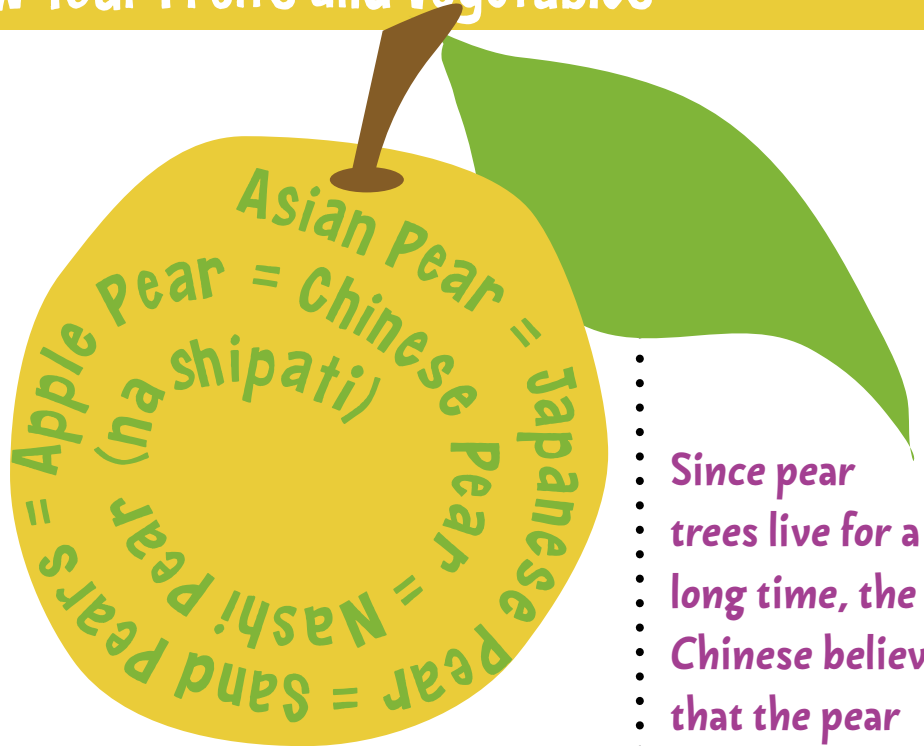
Fresh Story: Asian Pears



Get to Know Your Fruits and Vegetables

Pear or Apple?

With so many names and similarities to apples, Asian pears are a bit of a mystery. Are they a pear, apple, or a hybrid of both? Mystery solved - Asian pears are botanically true pears! Here are a few facts to help you sort it out:

-  **Pears can be divided into two** simple categories: European and Asian. Asian pears are uniform in colour and shaped more like apples, with a completely different texture and taste from European pears. Both are a great source of vitamin C and fibre.
-  **Like apples, Asian pears** are left to ripen on the tree before picking. When you get them home, they're ripe and ready to eat. Their skin colour and crisp texture remain unchanged after picking and they'll keep for months in a paper bag in the refrigerator. That's the cold chain keeping them fresh and fresh tasting!



-  **An Asian pear may feel rock-hard** but it can easily bruise in the packing, or shipping process – a stretchy, net-like 'jacket' protects its delicate skin.
-  **Unlike European pear varieties** that soften as they ripen and yield to gentle pressure of your thumb, ripe Asian pears are extremely firm. What's the best indicator of ripeness? Use your nose – your Asian pear should have a fairly strong and sweet aroma.

Since pear trees live for a long time, the Chinese believed that the pear was a symbol of immortality. The Chinese word "li" means both "pear" and "separation". For this reason, tradition says to avoid a separation, friends should never halve and share a pear.

How would you describe the texture and taste of your Asian pear?

The Chinese have cultivated these crunchy pears for more than two thousand years. The most popular types grown in BC are the **20th Century Fancy** and the **Kosui Fancy**. (The word Kosui means 'good water' in Japanese).



Our farmlands are a precious resource...

Imagine visiting the countryside and not seeing cornfields, pumpkin patches, cows grazing, fresh cut hay or rows of fruit trees? Imagine no wetlands or green space for birds and other wild animals to feed and make their nests. There might be buildings, houses, shopping malls and roads there instead. Can we grow our food on parking lots?

What is agricultural land? Wherever we work on agriculture – on the farm and at the ranch, even in the forest, is agricultural land. What makes good agricultural land? Good soil. Once soil is paved over it cannot easily be turned back into farmland again.

As cities and towns grow, buildings and roads spread into neighbouring farmlands. Wouldn't it be great if we could draw a line around all the farms and nothing could cross that line? That's just what the province of BC did in 1973 when it created the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). We mapped out all of the lands being used for farming. Within these zones, farms of all types and sizes are recognized as the priority use of that land. Now, crucial farmland is preserved and urban growth is controlled.

Why do we need the ALR?

BC has spectacular landscape, but there is limited space for agriculture. Only 5% of BC's land is suitable for farming. Fertile soil takes thousands of years to develop requiring the right combination of climate, geology and biology. It is not something we can easily recreate.

With the ALR we can continue to have rural farmland for growing food, open spaces, wetlands for wildlife - things that make British Columbia a good place to live.

