

APRICOTS ALL YEAR LONG

Unlike fruits like apples and oranges that store well for longer periods of time, apricots are a “tender fruit” summer crop, which means they need to be eaten quite soon after picking. Most of BC’s apricots are grown in the Okanagan and are only available fresh at farm stands and grocery stores from early July to mid-August.

Apricots make a tasty snack fresh from the tree, but they can also be processed into jam, dried into a chewy treat, or baked/cooked into a recipe. Many people today (and in past generations too) enjoy apricots all year long by canning, drying, or freezing them.



ORCHARD WORK IN EVERY SEASON

Growing healthy apricot trees that produce quality fruit takes work in all four seasons. From spring right through fall, BC apricot farmers need to fertilize and water their trees and manage pests and weeds in their orchards. Each season also brings at least one other important job:



SPRING

In early spring, blossoms cover apricot trees and are the promise of fruit later in the season. Once tiny apricots start to form from the blossoms, apricot trees drop many of these fruitlets. Because there are still too many left on the tree to produce good quality fruit, farmers pick off extra fruitlets so that each one that is left has room to grow. This is called thinning, and it is a long, slow job.



SUMMER

Apricots are ready to harvest starting in July. Picking is always done by hand, and farmers only pick what’s ripe. Apricots on the top and outside of the tree usually ripen first, so farmers pick each tree multiple times, because the fruit on the inside and lower parts of the tree will be ready later. To reach the high branches, farmers use ladders or special lift machines called cherry pickers or boom lifts.



FALL

One of the most important jobs in preparing an orchard for winter is to blow out the irrigation lines. In BC’s Okanagan, winter temperatures can drop to -20°C and lower. If water stays in the irrigation pipes it will freeze and expand, and the pipes will burst. Growers use machines called compressors to blow air into every pipe in their orchards to push all the water out before winter.



WINTER

In winter, farmers prune (clip back) their trees. A mature apricot tree will bear fruit for up to 25 years, and during that time, its branches will add more than one metre of new growth every year. Pruning helps growers manage the size of their trees to make harvesting easier. And without pruning, the trees would get too big and would put all of their energy into their leaves and wood instead of into growing fruit.

SOCIAL STUDIES & LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITY: WORKING WITH THE LAND

Curriculum Connection: Social Studies - grades 4 to 7: Sequence objects, images, or events, and distinguish between what has changed and what has stayed the same (continuity and change). Language Arts - grades 4 to 7: Curiosity and wonder lead us to new discoveries about ourselves and the world around us. Everyone has a unique story to share. [First Peoples Principles of Learning](#): Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Using “Orchard Work in Every Season” on the student side of this sheet, have a classroom discussion about what a fruit grower does for their apricot trees in each season. Then, have students brainstorm what local First Peoples have traditionally done to prepare their food in each season. Have students fill out each section of a Venn diagram, choosing ideas from the class brainstorm.

Then, look for similarities between fruit growers and First Peoples. How does learning involve generational roles and responsibilities? (Growers learn how to prune apricot trees from other growers before them, and First Peoples learned how to harvest from their elders.) How is life similar for traditional First Peoples and fruit growers in winter? Do they harvest in the winter? What do they do in the spring? How do both groups prepare for the summer?

Extension: Ask students if they can think of activities they do every season that relate to the seasonal work in an apricot orchard. For example, do they plant a garden in the spring? Or harvest in the fall? How about in the summer? When do their bodies do the most growing – is it in the spring and summer months, just like an apricot tree?

SCIENCE ACTIVITY: FRESH VERSUS DRIED FRUIT EXPERIMENT

Curriculum Connection: Science - grades 4 to 7: Processing and analyzing data and communicating. Discuss and share observations and ideas orally.

Hypothesis

Have the class prepare a hypothesis on how many students will like the fresh versus dried fruit.

Procedure

If you don't have a dehydrator that you can bring to class, apricots can be dried in the sun or in the staff room oven or microwave (see “4 Different Methods of Drying Apricots”: www.dryingallfoods.com/drying-apricots). Alternatively, purchase and bring some dried apricots to class.

Observation

The next day, hold a taste test with samples of the dried and fresh apricots. Ask the students to identify the differences between the two.

Analyze

Discuss whether they prefer the dried or fresh version. Keep a running tally of student responses and quotes for them to use in their write-up.

Conclusion

Answer the hypothesis. The answer will vary depending on the class' preference.

MATH QUESTIONS

Curriculum Connection: Mathematics - grades 4 to 7: Reasoning and analyzing. Develop mental math strategies and abilities to make sense of quantities. Grades 6 to 7: Engage in problem-solving experiences that are connected to place and story.

Apricots take different amounts of time to dehydrate in a drying shed. Usually, drying time can be anywhere from two to three days, and the fruit is turned once a day for equal drying.

A grower loads a drying shed with 1,000 kilograms of apricots. After one day in the shed, they lose 60 percent of their weight in water. How much do the apricots weigh now?

Answer:

$1,000 \times 0.6 = 600$ kg
 $1,000 - 600 = 400$ kg
 The apricots weigh 400 kilograms after one day in the drying shed.

Now the orchardist has to bag and label the dried apricots. If there are 9,216 dried apricots, and each bag holds 12, how many bags will the orchardist have?

Answer: $9,216 \div 12 = 768$ The orchardist will have 768 bags.

After the apricots are bagged, they will have to be boxed and shipped. If each box holds 8 bags, how many boxes will the orchardist have to ship?

Answer: $768 \div 8 = 96$ The orchardist will have to ship 96 boxes.