

Avocado-Teaching Points Grades 3-4

How Much Do I Need?

- ❖ A serving of avocados is one-quarter cup sliced avocado. This is about one-fifth of a medium avocado.

Reasons to Eat Avocados

- ❖ There are good fats and bad fats that we eat. Avocados are a source of a good kind of fat called omega-3. Scientists are finding that the fat in avocados increases the body's ability to absorb and use antioxidants. Antioxidants help prevent chemical damage to cells and promote vision health, keep the immune system healthy, support cardiovascular health and help prevent cancer. Common vitamins with antioxidant properties are A, C and E.
- ❖ Omega-3 is an essential fat. This means it is essential for our health but is not made by our bodies. We must get it from our food.
- ❖ Avocados are a source of fiber, vitamin K, vitamin E and folate. Remember vitamin K helps our cuts stop bleeding and helps our bones grow strong. Folate is very important for our body's to grow and develop the way it should.

Visit the Educators Corner @ www.harvestofthemonth.com for definitions of nutritional terms and the vitamin list in April's Student Slueths for asparagus

Eat Your Colors

- ❖ Avocados are in the green color group.
- ❖ Remember to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables every day - red, yellow, orange, white, green, blue and purple. Eat a rainbow every day.

Home Grown Facts

- ❖ Avocados grow on trees.
- ❖ California ranks number one in avocado production, growing more than 90 percent of the nation's crop.
- ❖ Avocados rank in the State's top 20 commodities with a total value of over \$380 million.
- ❖ The most popular variety of avocado is the Hass. It has green, bumpy skin that turns a dark purple-black when ripe.

What's in a Name?

- ❖ Originally called ahuatatl by the Aztecs of ancient Mexico.
- ❖ The Spanish word for avocado is aguacate.
- ❖ The English colonists nicknamed it the "alligator pear". Can you guess why? It is thought the English mistook the name aguacate for alligator and added pear because of the shape.
- ❖ The name aguacate eventually changed into avocado by Americans who could not pronounce the Spanish.



- ❖ Many people think avocados are green vegetables but they are really fruits. The avocado is a single-seeded fleshy berry.
- ❖ There are more than 80 different varieties grown in California.
- ❖ The other varieties grown in California are known as “greenskins” because their skins do not change color as they ripen.

For information, visit: <http://food.oregonstate.edu> and search for avocado



A Slice of Avocado History

- ❖ Native to the tropics of Central America, the avocado tree originated in southern Mexico and Columbia around 5,000 B.C.E.
- ❖ When the Spanish conquistadors first came to Central America, the Aztec Indians gave them avocados as a gift.
- ❖ The avocado tree was first introduced to the United States in 1883 by Judge Henry Perrine who sent trees from Mexico to Florida.
- ❖ Dr. Thomas White of the California State Agricultural Society imported the first California avocado tree from Nicaragua to Los Angeles in 1856.
- ❖ The California avocado industry did not start until 1870 when trees in Santa Barbara (imported from Mexico) began to bear fruit.

Just the Facts

- ❖ An avocado tree can grow as tall as 80 feet and produce about 400 avocados every year.
- ❖ The Hass avocado has a creamy texture that people love. Growers like this variety because it resists insects that may harm the trees and can produce avocados all year long.
- ❖ Many people misspell the Hass avocado Haas.

Student Sleuths

- ❖ Avocados do not ripen on the tree. They are sent unripe to the supermarket.
- ❖ Find out how long it takes an avocado to ripen once picked. Develop an experiment to speed up the ripening process.

Avocados ripen in 3-5 days. Supermarkets sell pre-softened avocados by storing them with other fruits, like bananas, or treating them with a special gas to stimulate ethylene synthesis. Growers can keep avocados on the tree up to 4-6 months after being fully developed. After this time, the fruit will usually fall to the ground and ripen.

For information, visit: <http://www.cfaitc.org/Commodity/Commodity.php> or <http://ucavo.ucr.edu/>

Adventurous Activities

- ❖ Cut two avocados in half and remove the seeds. Squeeze lemon juice over one half, apple juice over another, salt over another and leave the fourth one alone. If appropriate, discuss oxidation as a class.

How Do Avocados Grow?

- ❖ An avocado tree will produce fruit anytime after 5-20 years.
- ❖ The tree does not like freezing temperatures. It only grows in tropical and sub-tropical climates.
- ❖ The Hass variety was developed to withstand freezing temperatures.
- ❖ To produce fruit in one or two years, growers use grafted trees and rootstocks.

School Garden Avocado Trees

- ❖ Students can practice gardening at home by growing their own miniature avocado tree. A tree grown from seed may take from five to 13 years to flower and bear fruit and require little maintenance once planted. Do not expect this tree to bear fruit unless grafting is used.

Tools:

- ❖ One large avocado seed, washed
- ❖ Three toothpicks
- ❖ Glass jar
- ❖ Large pot (about 10 ½ inch diameter)
- ❖ Hummus soil for pot



Activity:

- ❖ Use toothpicks to suspend seed (broad end down) over water-filled jar. Seed should be covered about one inch.
- ❖ Place jar in a warm place out of direct sunlight. Replenish water as needed.
- ❖ Roots and stems will sprout in about two to six weeks.
- ❖ When the stem is about seven inches long, cut back to three inches.
- ❖ When roots are thick and stems have leaves again, transplant to pot leaving the seed half-exposed.
- ❖ Water lightly and frequently. Keep soil moist, not saturated.
- ❖ When the stem is 12 inches high, cut back to six inches.

Hint: Yellow leaves are a sign of over-watering; let plant dry out for a few days. Brown or fried leaves are a sign that there is too much salt in the soil. Allow water to run freely in the pot and drain for several minutes



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