

PATIENCE FOR THE PERFECT PEAR!

Fruit often tastes best when it ripens on a tree, but pears are different. They usually need to be picked before they are ripe for their sweetness to develop. Pears will ripen during shipping and in storage so that by the time they get to you, they are ready for eating.

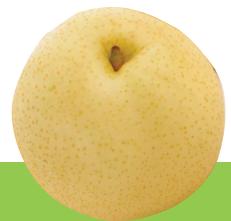
Be patient, and you can enjoy fresh pears long after summer is over!



BARTLETT pears are picked in the late summer. Keep them out of the fridge, and they'll ripen in just a week or two.



ANJOU and **BOSC** pears are picked in the fall. These winter pears need to be stored in a cold place for at least three weeks before they will ripen.



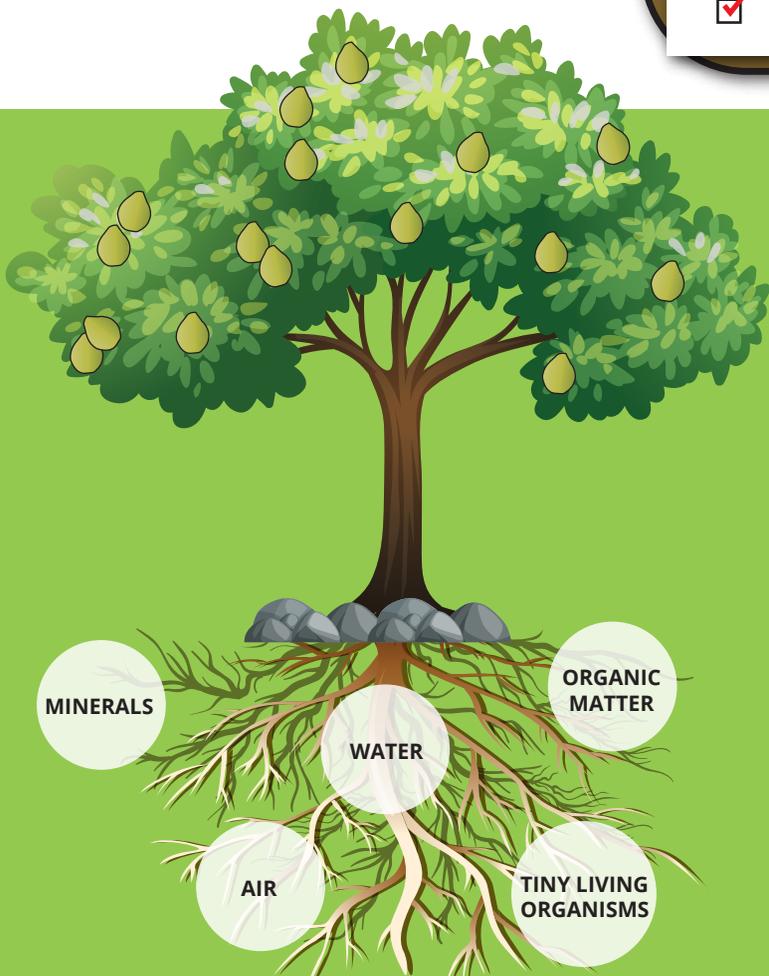
Round and crunchy like an apple, **ASIAN** pears are the only kind of pear that ripens on the tree. Only a few farmers in BC grow Asian pears.

WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?

Being a fruit farmer is a big job. Farmers need to keep bugs and other pests away that would chomp on the trees or the fruit and destroy their crop. They need to keep grass and weeds small so that the trees don't have to fight for food, water, and light. And they need to protect their trees from diseases. Some farmers choose to copy nature's ways of managing pests, weeds, and disease. These farmers are called organic farmers.

AN ORGANIC FARMER'S CHECKLIST

- Feed the soil:** with natural fertilizers like composted food scraps and leaf waste.
- Recycle waste:** by putting organic waste, like manure, back into the soil.
- Manage weeds:** by hand-pulling, cutting, or letting animals graze around the trees.
- Water carefully:** with just the right amount of water.
- Get a certificate:** to prove strict rules are being followed.
- NO** harmful synthetic, chemical substances.



FARMING - UNDER THE TREE!

There's a living world underground, where a tree's roots are taking nourishment from the soil. All farmers care about healthy soil and work hard to "feed the soil, not the plant." What's in healthy soil?

Nutrients for trees!

MINERALS: bits of broken-down rock.

AIR: healthy soil is about ¼ air!

WATER: just the right amount of moisture.

ORGANIC MATTER: tiny pieces of decayed plants, bugs, and animals.

TINY LIVING ORGANISMS: millions of bacteria, fungi, insects, plants, and more!

Farmers use a lot of different ways to keep their trees growing healthy and producing fruit year after year. Today, many farmers are trying to reduce their footprint by adopting organic farming techniques. They control pests, weeds, and disease in an environmentally sound way, and they use naturally managed soil to produce good crops.

ACTIVITY: LIVING VS. NON-LIVING THINGS

Curriculum Connection: Science - grades 1 to 3: Make observations about living and non-living things in the local environment. Experience and interpret the local environment.

Read "Farming – Under the Tree!" on the student side of the sheet to your class. Point out to students that the soil in every orchard has its own unique blend of organic and non-organic matter, including small rocks, decaying plants, fungi, insects, and humus. Humus is rich, dark earth made from fully decomposed compost.

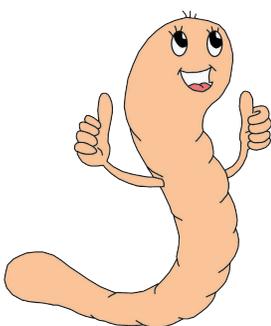
Conduct an experiment with students to determine which soil has the most humus:

1. Prepare three different dishes of soil: clay, sand, and compost.
2. Place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of each sample into three separate clear glass jars.
3. Fill each jar with water and screw on the top.
4. Give each jar a good shake for 2 to 3 minutes, then let settle for 15 minutes. The humus will be suspended in the water and will look cloudy.
5. With a partner, have students discuss and illustrate which soil sample has the most humus.

Finally, make a unique blend of soil by having students combine all three soil samples in one large jar with water. Again, shake for 2 to 3 minutes, then let settle for 30 minutes. Have the students observe, discuss, and illustrate their findings.

ACTIVITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH WORMY WORM

Curriculum Connection: Language Arts - grades 1 to 3: Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding.



Read the following interview to your class, then ask students to discuss it with a partner and see if they can think of one or two questions they would like to ask Wormy Worm.

Interviewer: How's the soil at the pear orchard, Wormy?

Wormy Worm: Thanks for asking! Farmer Green is watering the pear trees today, so the forecast is for some irrigation water pools in our tunnel system. Air quality is good and humus collection is up. Our bug neighbours to the south tell us there is wonderful organic manure where the new fruit trees were planted. The extra clover ground cover is controlling the weeds, and the mason bees have just arrived to do their pollination work. Our four-legged friends, the rabbits, report that the grass in the orchard is very sweet and ready to eat. With soil this good, I predict a large harvest of pears this year!

MATH QUESTION

Curriculum Connection: Mathematics - grades 1 to 3: Represent mathematical ideas in concrete, pictorial, and symbolic forms.

Your grandmother is going to make a delicious pear dessert for her Sunday night family dinner of six people. Her recipe calls for a half pear for each person. How many pears should she buy? After purchase, pears can sometimes take 7 to 10 days to ripen. When should she buy the pears (i.e., the Sunday before, etc.)?

PLEASING PEAR VOCABULARY

Organic farming: using natural ways to manage pests, weeds, and disease on a farm (e.g., feeding the soil with composted food scraps and leaf waste, hand-pulling weeds, irrigating with rainwater, etc.).

Organism: any living thing, from tiny bacteria to a big dairy cow.

Pest: a plant or animal that is harmful to crops.

Soil: the loose layer of material on the Earth's surface in which plants have their roots.



FAMILY CONNECTION

Ask students to plan a backyard, balcony, or community garden with their families. What would they feed their soil?