

# Experiential Activities Grades 3-5





# Community and Home Gardening

## Kid Friendly Fun

### Pick-Your-Own Apples!

Apples are one of the easiest fruit to pick and use. They're big, not easily bruised, most varieties store well, they can be eaten fresh, cooked, canned, frozen and made into many tasty and healthy dishes. Did you know a bushel weighs between 42 and 48 lbs!?!



Apples are full of healthy nutrients, and very portable! So throw some in your backpack for a quick, healthy snack!

Most modern apple orchards have dwarf trees that are very close to the ground. Select firm, bruise-free apples. The color can be anything from dark green, to yellow, pink, orange, bright red, dark red or even a combination. It all depends on the variety. And color is not really how you tell when an apple is ripe. Apples should be crisp and firm. The key will be to ask the farmers which are ripe. S/he will know because it is calculated from the number of days since the trees flowered. And s/he will track that date carefully, if s/he's a good apple grower! The farmer will also know what characteristics to look for in the particular varieties that s/he is growing.

#### When are apples ripe - how to tell!

Apples ripen from the outside of the tree towards the center, so the apples out the outside of the tree will ripen first. Once they are picked, they stop ripening. Picking apples directly from a tree is easy. Roll the apple upwards off the branch and give a little twist; don't pull straight away from the tree. If two apples are joined together at the top, both will come away at the same time. Don't shake the trees or branches. If the apple you are trying to pick drops, (or others on the tree) go ahead and pick it up. They're perfectly fine! But do wash them before you eat them! Try to leave the stem on the apples – some say that helps them store longer!

CHECK OUT THE TIPS ON THE NEXT PAGE!!



### More Tips

- **Once picked**, don't throw the apples into the baskets, place them in gently, or they will bruise and go bad more quickly.
- **Don't wash apples until** just before using to prevent spoilage.
- **Keep apples cool** after picking to increase shelf life. A cool basement is ideal, but the fruit/vegetable drawer of a refrigerator will work, too. Kept cool, fresh-picked apples will generally keep weeks, but it DOES depend on the variety. Red and Yellow Delicious apples do not keep well, for example; but Rome, do! High humidity helps to keep the apples from shriveling, but don't let them get actually wet. A wet towel placed nearby helps to keep the humidity up. A refrigerator is fine for small quantities of apples. Boxed apples need to be kept in a cool, dark spot where they won't freeze. Freezing ruptures all of an apple's cells, turning it into one large bruise overnight. Apples and potatoes should never be stored together because, as they age, potatoes release an ethylene gas, which makes apples spoil faster. If you can keep the gas away from your apples, they will keep just fine. Just don't store them right next to potatoes. Prevent contact between apples stored for the winter by wrapping them individually in sheets of newspaper. The easiest way to do this is to unfold a section of newspaper all the way and tear it into quarters. Then stack the wrapped apples.

Sources: <http://pickyourown.org/applepicking.htm>  
<http://minneapolis.happeningmag.com/apple-picking-time/>





## Plant Late Bloomers

No need to pack in your shovel yet: A number of plants grow strong throughout the fall. For color, opt for pansies, which flourish in nippier temps, or hardy marigolds, asters, and zinnias (a fave for butterflies!). Veggies like arugula and spinach go from seed to salad in about a month. Kale is another nutritious pick to harvest at summer's end.

Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/fall-gardening-kids>





# Community and Home Gardening Coloring & Activity Sheets

## Pumpkin Container Garden

Your mini pumpkins can be more than just decoration - hollow out the inside, fill with soil, and plant some herbs and spices! They'll look great on your windowsill, and they'll make your fall cooking even tastier.



Source: <http://www.parents.com/fun/activities/outdoor/kid-friendly-fall-garden-ideas/?slideId=27785>





# Community and Home Gardening Kid Friendly Fun

## Seed Balls

Enlist the kids to transform this year's garden leftovers into seed balls they can throw in the garden next spring.



### Step one

In a big bowl, combine three handfuls clay, two handfuls dirt, and one handful seeds.

### Step two

Slowly add water until you can work the mixture like dough. Roll into 1" balls.

### Step three

Place on baking tray; let dry. Store in an airtight container until ready to toss in your spring/summer garden! (after tossing, be sure to cover with a light layer of soil)

Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/fall-gardening-kids>



# COMMIT TO HEALTH

## Community and Home Gardening Kid Friendly Fun

### SPRING FORWARD (Florally)!

Fall is often the time to plant iris, snowdrop, crocus, hyacinth, tulip, and daffodil bulbs (see picture, from left) for pretty spring blossoms. To encourage the plants to develop strong root systems, you'll need to get them in the ground before the first frost. See the Fall Bulb Planting map on the second page to check when you should plant your bulbs, based on where you live! Then follow these simple tips:



#### Choose well

Select plump, firm bulbs. Steer clear of ones that are crumbly, soft, or moldy, the way garlic looks and feels when it's gone bad.

#### Plant in clumps

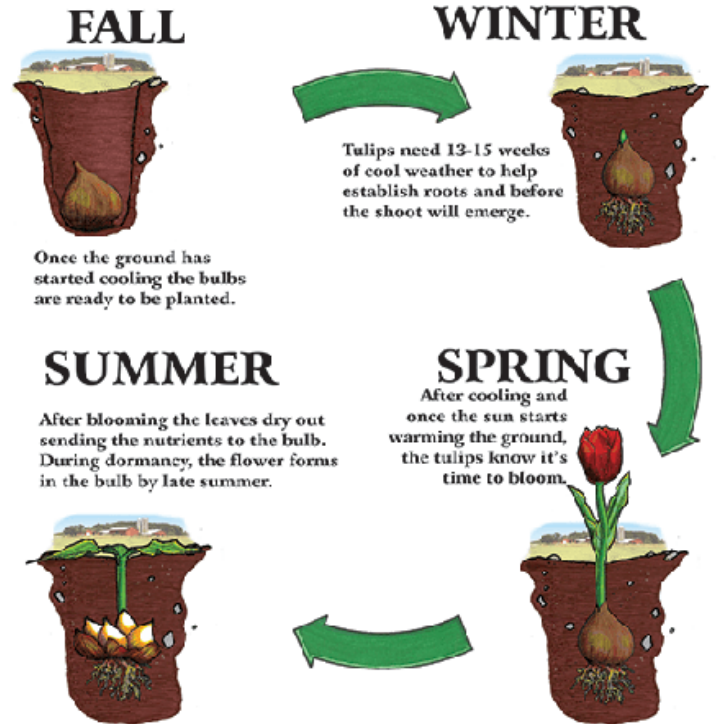
A single flower looks lonely, so group three to five bulbs together in an area about the width of a dinner plate.

#### Double time

The secret to dramatic blooms: two layers of bulbs. Cover the first with soil, then add the second; cover until the tips just poke through.

#### Water generously

Don't be stingy with the hose—bulbs need a good soaking in order to sprout roots. Then keep the soil moist, not soggy.





Sources: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/fall-gardening-kids>  
<http://www.coolgarden.me/fall-planting-list-3043/>  
<http://blog.gardenharvestsupply.com/2014/09/23/fall-flower-bulb-planting-schedule/>







## Community and Home Gardening Kid Friendly Fun

### Store Your Apples for the Winter

Apples can be kept for months, given the right variety and conditions. Here's how to store them:

#### Varieties of apples that store well:

It's almost easier to say which apples do not store well. In general, softer, thin-skinned types like Gala and Delicious (red and yellow), do not age well or store well. Summer varieties (early ripening varieties) again, like Gall, also do not store well. You want harder, later ripening varieties. Ask the farmer at the Pick-Your-Own orchard which apples will do well stored inside during the winter. The apples need to be bruise-free!

#### How long will they store?

Typically, three or four months. After that, they start to dry out, get a wrinkled appearance and become softer and more spongy feeling. Still good to make applesauce or apple butter, or even dried apples.

#### Storage conditions

These are critical:

1. Temperature: cool; just above freezing (but never to or below freezing) is best. Short of that, as cold as you can get without freezing!
2. Light: dark or dim light. NO direct sunlight!
3. Humidity: 90% humidity keeps the apples from drying out. Unless you have a humidifier with a setting for percentage of desired humidity, there's probably not much you can do about this. But the apples must stay dry; if water comes in contact it will start rot!
4. Vermin: Non- human type, that is: bugs, animals etc. None! Free of life forms that will attack your apples!
5. Spacing: apples should not touch each other. Those points of contact will spread mold!
6. Do not store apples in the same small room with potatoes or tomatoes. As these age, they release a gas that makes apples spoil faster. A large room should be fine, if they are not near each other. And pungent foods, like onions, can affect the flavor of apples, which can absorb these odors.

While a walk-in fridge or root cellar is ideal, an unheated basement, an enclosed, unheated porch, a heated garage that does not freeze, an unheated attic, will also work well.

#### Materials needed

- Newspaper
- Shallow boxes or crates (get free boxes from Costco and Sam's Club which are ideal for this - 3 or 4 inches deep and about 18 inches by 34 inches wide and long)
- A cool dark, dry place for storing



### How to do it

1. Wrap each apple individually in a sheet of newspaper. I use a page each apple (tear the double pages in half along the seam).
2. Put an apple in one end of the page and simply roll and wrap it up! I twist the ends a bit to keep it from unraveling.
3. Don't mix apple varieties. Different varieties ripen at different rates, so put different varieties in different boxes.
4. Sorting: as you wrap, set aside any bruised apples. Apples with even small bruises should be set aside to use first - don't even bother wrapping these. Only bruise-free apples should be used for long-term storage.
5. Put each wrapped apple in one of the storage boxes, 1 apple deep.

### Monitoring Storage

The boxed apples need to be kept in a cool, dark spot where they won't freeze.

Periodically (weekly, at least) unwrap a few apples to verify for spoilage. Look for dark or wet spots as a sign.

Remove spoiled apples and any contaminated newspaper right away.

Source:

[http://www.pickyourown.org/Apples\\_how\\_to\\_store\\_for\\_the\\_winter.php#PXsvVrCie3g1jkOm.99](http://www.pickyourown.org/Apples_how_to_store_for_the_winter.php#PXsvVrCie3g1jkOm.99)



**NRPA** National Recreation  
and Park Association

[www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth](http://www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth)

#CommitToHealth