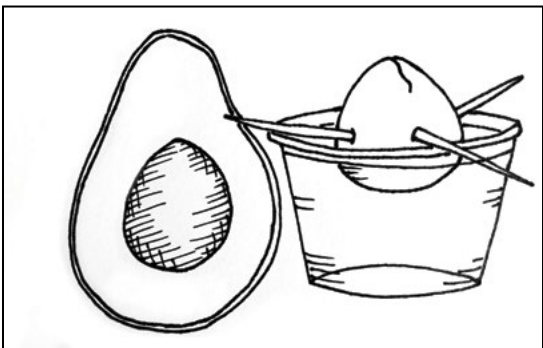


Trees Are Special

Trees are indeed special. We use their wood to make boards to build with, and we get heat from burning logs in fireplaces and stoves. Sawdust, wood shavings and mulch can be used to line animal pens, absorb wet messes and beautify garden beds. We use the pulp from trees to make all types of paper for text books, magazines and birthday cards. We also get wonderful fruits from trees, such as almonds, olives, mangos and apples.

One of the most important things that trees do is clean the air. They are pollution fighting machines; taking in carbon dioxide, intercepting airborne particles and absorbing both odors and pollutants (carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, ammonia, nitrogen dioxide and ozone). Trees then release oxygen, which is needed by every living thing on earth. It takes approximately 500 mature trees to absorb the amount of carbon dioxide that is produced by a typical car in only one year. Young trees absorb more carbon than old ones, so planting new trees is a great way to help our environment.

The following is a fun environmental lesson that involves eating delicious fruits and recycling the pit or seed by planting your very own pollution fighting, energy conserving, fruit bearing tree. The best seeds come from fully ripe fruit, purchased in season, from a local farmer's market. After eating the fruit, save the seeds or pit. Then, follow the directions below and grow your tree!

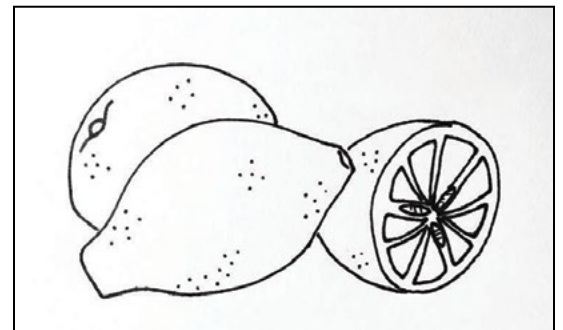


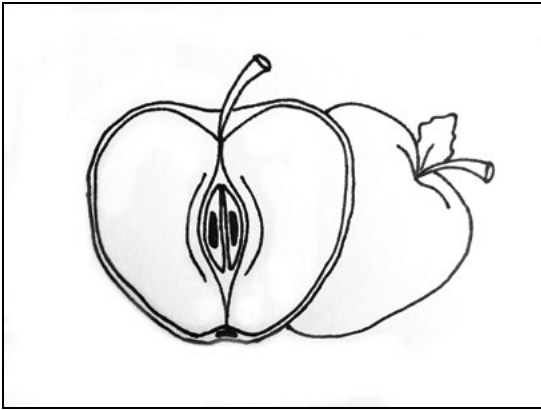
Avocado

Begin by gently removing and washing the pit. Examine it to determine the pointier top from the flatter bottom. Place 3-4 toothpicks around the center of the pit and place it on a container of water so that only the bottom portion of the pit is submerged. Put the container on a windowsill. Change the water each week to prevent bacteria and mold from forming. Your tree will sprout in 4-6 weeks!

Citrus Fruits (lemons, limes and oranges)

Citrus plants are easy to grow, but need warm climates and sunshine to produce fruit. Smaller trees, such as the Meyer lemon, can be grown indoors. To plant your own tree, remove the seeds from the fruit, wash and let them dry for a week or two. Plant the dried seeds in a container of loose potting soil. Cover the pot with plastic wrap to keep the soil moist before germination and place the container in a sunny window.



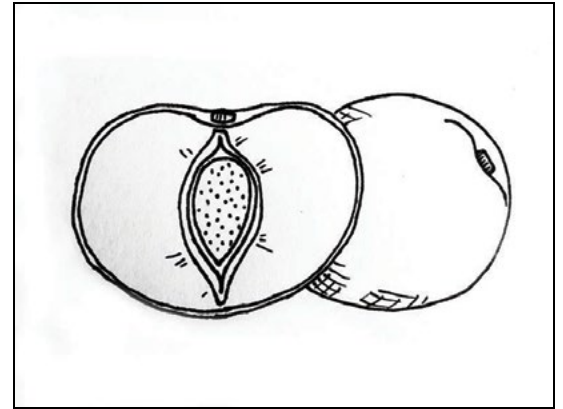


Apples

Apple trees are fun and easy to grow, but since most commercially grown apples come from grafted trees, planting one from seeds will probably not produce the fruit you want. Collect apple seeds from any variety of organically grown apples. Rinse the seeds and dry them with paper towels. Place the seeds inside moist paper towels, in a sealed container, and refrigerate for 60-70 days. Remove the seeds and plant them in containers filled with loose potting soil.

Stone Fruits (including peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines and cherries)

Soak the stone for 5 minutes, then gently wash off all remaining fruit. Place the stone on a paper towel and let it dry for 3-5 days. Use a nutcracker to carefully crack the stone to extract the almond-shaped seed. (This step is not necessary for cherries.) Place the seeds in a sealed container and put it in the refrigerator for 10 weeks. Remove the seeds and plant them in containers filled with loose potting soil.



Extension:

Maple syrup is not a fruit, but it does come from a tree! Maple syrup is made from collected tree sap that is slowly boiled down into a thick sweet syrup. Maple trees are very easy to grow. Their seeds ripen and disperse in large quantities each autumn. The seed cases are sometimes called "helicopters" because of the way they spin and fly down from the trees. Read more about maple trees in **Danny's Special Tree**, level 21/M.

