

An Apple a Day

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Have you ever eaten an apple and wondered where it came from? If you're thinking "the grocery store," then read on to learn more!

Apples are fruits that grow on trees. In the spring apple trees form pretty flowers that are attractive to bees and other nectar-drinking insects. When a bee flies in to get a drink, it accidentally collects pollen that then gets brushed off onto the next apple blossom it flies to. In this way the flowers get pollinated and start to grow into apples. By autumn the apples are ripe and ready to eat.

Most of the apples we buy at the store come from places like Washington and Michigan, but some are grown in Minnesota. Although apple trees are not native to Minnesota, seeds and young trees were brought here by early settlers in the 1800's. Some of those trees grew, but most didn't do too well. It gets so cold in Minnesota that the flower buds would freeze and die during the winter. Sometimes the flower buds survived and grew into apples, but the apples wouldn't have time to ripen because our growing season is so short. Botanists at the University of Minnesota worked to create apple trees that could survive the harsh Minnesota climate. We now have many varieties of Minnesota apples.

Next time you're at the grocery store, ask your grocers if they have any Minnesota apples. If they don't, look for them at a farmers market next fall. In the meantime try this easy recipe for an apple snack. Remember to get permission from your grown-ups!

Sweet Apple Snacks

You'll need one washed apple, one cup of chocolate chips and a cup of chopped peanuts.

Melt the chocolate chips in a bowl in the microwave for about 40 seconds. You don't want them to melt all the way in there because they burn easily. Stir them until they're smooth.

Place the apple on a plate and pour the melted chocolate all over the top of it. Then sprinkle the peanuts over the melted chocolate.

Put the whole thing into the freezer for five to ten minutes, until the chocolate is hard again. Be sure you don't leave it so long that the apple freezes!

If you want to learn more about apples, look for some books at the library. Then be sure to come to the Dakota County Fair in August. We'll be having lots of apple activities in the Master Gardeners' Children's Garden. This year we're celebrating the 150th anniversary of the University of Minnesota, so we'll have lots of information on Minnesota apples and other great plants developed at the University.