



Nature Study

Each Friday morning, you will go through two of our nature cards. They are labeled in the upper right corner with the corresponding week. These are short, factual cards with images to help your child become familiar with objects in the natural world.

As you progress through our sessions, you may find it handy to keep your past nature cards in a binder for easy reference when your children come across a familiar object. These seeds you are planting will grow into a wonderful garden of knowledge for your children in years to come.

As you explore nature outside your home, watch and listen for newly discovered delights. Most of all, remember...

"Point to some lovely flower or gracious tree, not only as a beautiful work, but as a beautiful thought of God."

~ Charlotte Mason

Nature Study



Apples 1

Malus domestica

- Apples are one of the most common and widespread fruits grown around the world. In fact, during the Middle Ages, the term "apple" was often used to describe many different types of fruit.
- There are over 7,500 types of edible apples in the world!
- Apples originated in Central Asia, though the original fruit was wild and almost nothing like the apples produced today.
- Apple trees grow flowers in the spring, but the fruit is not ripe until autumn/winter time.
- In many cultures, apples are symbolic of life, knowledge, health, and immortality. In Greek mythology, the gift of an apple led to the Trojan War. In Christianity, apples are often depicted as the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. For ancient Celts, apples were a symbol of fertility and abundance. In Norse mythology, the gods consumed magical apples to become immortal.



Grapes 1

Vitis vinifera

- There are over 5000 varieties of *Vitis vinifera* grapes, but only a few of them are edible.
- Grapes can be eaten fresh or dried in the form of raisins, sultanas, and currents, and their juice can be processed and fermented to make wine and vinegar. Grape leaves are also eaten in many cultures.
- The Mesopotamians and Ancient Egyptians cultivated many vine plantations to make wine. It was also believed that both grapes and wine had healing properties.
- The healthiest part of the grape is actually the seed, though it is often removed for regular consumption.



Figs 2

Ficus carica

- Figs are one of the oldest cultivated plants, dating back to around 5,000 BC.
- The plant itself has been cultivated since ancient times and now grows all over the world and is used for both fruit and decoration.
- In ancient times, figs were believed to have medicinal properties and were commonly used to treat various ailments from stomach pains to skin problems.
- Figs do not keep well once they've been picked, so they're usually dried and preserved once they are ripe.



Pomegranates 2

Daucus carota

- Pomegranates originated in the Middle East, but they were also cultivated in South Asia and the Mediterranean for thousands of years. It took a long time for pomegranates to be cultivated in England and the Americas as the people there didn't know how to make them grow.
- The name pomegranate derives from the medieval Latin "pōmum" meaning "apple", and "grānātum" meaning "seeded".
- Pomegranates grow on shrubs or small trees and grow between 15 and 30 feet high.
- Ancient Egyptians regarded the pomegranate as a symbol of prosperity.
- According to the Ebers Papyrus, which is an ancient medical document from around 1500 BC, pomegranates were also used to treat infections.



Dates 3

Phoenix dactylifera

- Dates have grown in the Middle East and the Indus Valley for thousands of years and are highly symbolic in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religions.
- Dates are mentioned over 50 times in the Bible and 20 times in the Quran.
- Many Jewish scholars believe that when the Bible talks about honey in the scripture "a land flowing with milk and honey," it is actually referring to date "honey," rather than honey made from bees.
- Dates are eaten in many ways, but it's common to eat them dried with different types of fillings, such as almonds, walnuts, pecans, candied orange or lemon peels, tahini, marzipan, or cream cheese.
- The name "date" comes from a Greek word that means "finger."



Date Palm 3

Phoenix dactylifera

- Date palm trees reach up to 100 feet in height and can live over 100 years if maintained properly.
- It can take 4-8 years for a palm tree to start bearing fruit.
- One date palm tree can produce 10,000 dates in just one harvest season.
- The dates have to be harvested by hand.
- Judean date palm seeds are also long-lived. A stash of 2000-year-old seeds was found and planted, seven of which successfully sprouted into trees that were named Adam, Methuselah, Hannah, Judith, Boaz, Jonah, and Uriel.
- In North Africa, date palm leaves are commonly used for making huts. Mature leaves are also made into mats, screens, baskets, and fans.



Watermelons 4

Citrullus lanatus

- A melon is any of the various plants of the family Cucurbitaceae with sweet, edible, and fleshy fruit. The word "melon" can refer either to the plant or specifically to the fruit.
- Melons were among the earliest plants to be domesticated in the Old World and among the first crop species brought by westerners to the New World.
- Watermelons were originally cultivated for their high water content and were stored to be eaten during dry seasons, not only as a food source, but also as a method of storing water.
- Early watermelons were not sweet but bitter with yellowish-white flesh, and they were difficult to open. Through breeding, watermelons later tasted better and were easier to open.



Olives 4

Olea europaea

- Olive oil is mentioned more than 200 times in the Bible.
- In biblical times, olive oil was a highly prized and valuable commodity. It was used for food preparation, ceremonial offerings, and religious rituals, as well as to anoint priests and kings.
- Olive oil wasn't just used by religious leaders — everyday people also used it for cooking and other purposes. It was believed to have medicinal purposes and be beneficial for health and beauty, as well as being a symbol of wealth and abundance.
- Olives themselves are of major agricultural importance in the Mediterranean region as the source of olive oil and are one of the core ingredients in Mediterranean cuisine.
- About 80% of all harvested olives are turned into oil, while about 20% are used as table olives.



Honey 5

- Honey is produced by bees when they gather nectar from flowers and process it within their hive. The sugar content of honey gives it antibacterial, antifungal, and antioxidant properties, and it is a natural source of energy.
- In ancient times, honey was used as a form of medicinal treatment and natural

remedy. It was highly valued by many cultures for its healing powers, flavor and nutritional value. Honey was believed to have the power to cure a variety of ailments, including colds, sore throats and even wounds.

- Ancient Egyptians used honey in embalming practices, while the Greeks prized it for its healing properties. Honey was also used as a form of payment in some cultures.
- Raw honey contains small amounts of vitamins and minerals, making it a slightly healthier alternative to table sugar.



Almonds 5

Prunus amygdalus

- Almonds are drupes, or stone fruits, from the flowering plant *Prunus dulcis*, classified as a member of the Rosaceae family. They develop in clusters on trees and consist of an outer hull and a hard shell with the edible kernel inside.

- Almonds are one of the oldest food from trees that people have eaten for centuries.
- They originated in the Middle East, specifically in regions such as Syria, Turkey, and Iran, and there are records showing they were consumed by the ancient Egyptians.
- Almond trees held great symbolic meaning in many cultures - they were seen as a symbol of hope, fertility, rebirth, and peace. They also played an important role in religious ceremonies, especially in the Middle East.



Wheat 6

Triticum aestivum

- Wheat has been cultivated throughout history, with some records showing that it has been around for at least 10,000 years. Wheat is one of the world's most important crops, and it still remains an essential part of many diets today.

- Wheat was very important in ancient times due to its nutritional value and versatility.
- In the Bible, wheat is a symbol of abundance and is seen as a blessing from God. It was an important part of daily life for many cultures and was used in various rituals and festivals.
- In the Middle East, it was customary for newly married couples to toss wheat on each other. Wheat was also used to pay taxes in the Roman Empire and was used as a form of payment for slaves in ancient Egypt.



Barley 6

Hordeum vulgare

- Barley has been a key component of the diet of many civilizations for thousands of years. Its cultivation was believed to have first started in the lands surrounding the Fertile Crescent and was around 9,000 BC.

- Barley is an extremely resilient crop and can grow in many different environments, making it one of the most important cultivated grains in the world.
- The word "barn" originally came from the term "barley-house," where farmers would store the grain after harvest.
- Barley was an essential ingredient of both daily life and religious ritual. Used for baking bread, feeding livestock, and brewing beer.