Kentucky Harvest of the Month

Summer Edition!

JULY: TOMATOES

History

Tomatoes first grew as wild plants in the Andes Mountains (what today is Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile). Aztec farmers in Mexico cultivated the plant and then through the Spanish Conquistadores, tomatoes were introduced to The Philippines, the Caribbean, and Europe. However, initially, in Europe, they were believed to be poisonous and were only used for ornamental purposes. Italians are thought to be the first Europeans who ate tomatoes. Generally the tomato was also feared in British North American colonies and wasn't eaten much until the early 1800s.

Fruit or Vegetable?

We typically think of tomatoes as vegetables, but technically, botanically speaking, they are fruits! This is because fruits have seeds and develop from the flower of a plant. Other parts of plants, like roots, stems, leaves, are classified as vegetables. However, from the culinary perspective, we typically view them as vegetables because they were classified that way for tax purposes in 1937. So, whether you call it a fruit or vegetable, you're right one way or the other!

Fun Activities to do at Home

- Read *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* by Lauren Child (or watch a reading of the book here)
- Discover where tomatoes originated and how they spread across the world with the *Tomato Mapping Activity* (attached)
- Practice math skills with the *Tomato Count* activity (attached) + have a taste test with the tomatoes you cut up
- Make a recipe featuring fresh tomatoes - homemade salsa, pizza, spaghetti, caprese salad, skewers - the possibilities are endless!
- Watch this video to learn All About Tomatoes
- Grow a tomato plant in a pot on your porch, or a couple in your garden! Determinate tomato plants grow best in a pot because they will only grow 3-4 feet tall and will not be too big for the pot.

Tomatoes grow in many shapes and colors!

Kentucky Horticulture Council

Tomato Mapping Activity

Read through this timeline about how tomatoes spread from the Andes Mountains to the rest of the world! Follow the instructions on where and what to mark on your map (next page).
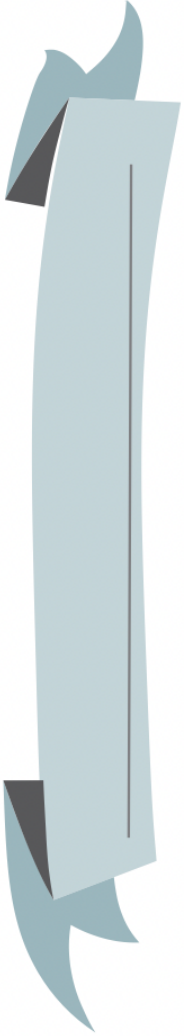
THIS MONTH'S FOOD:

TOMATOES

Tomatoes were first found growing as a wild plant in South America in the Andes Mountains in what are today the countries of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile.

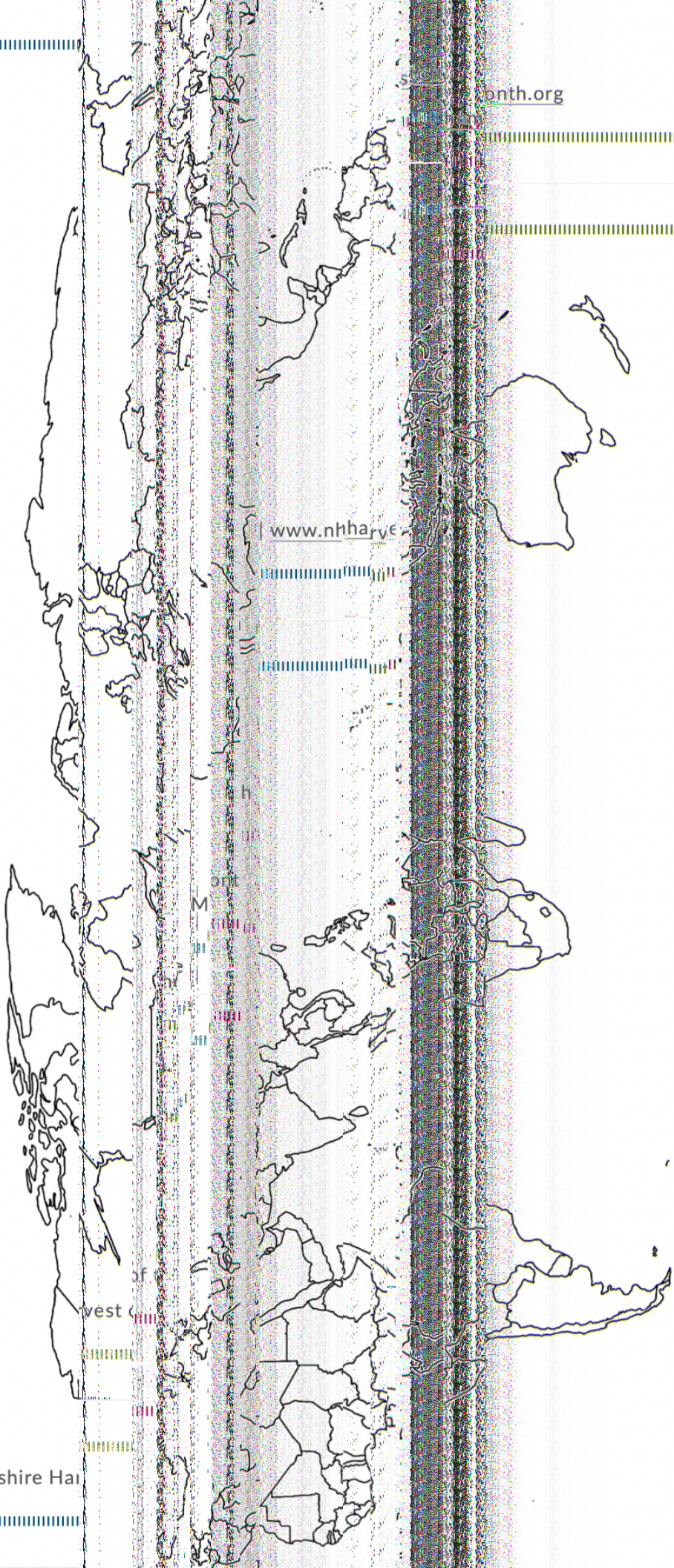*#1: Using colored pencils, mark the Andes mountains on your map.*

700S

700 AD: Aztec Farmers in what is today Mexico cultivated the wild plant, selecting for tasty and juicy fruits.

#2: Using colored pencils, mark Mexico on the map, and make a line following the tomato's journey to the region of Central America.

Early 1500's: Spanish Conquistadors were first introduced to the tomato and ... involved the trip to The Philippines (Southeast Asia) The Carribean, and Europe.

#3: Draw a line tracing the tomato's journey by ship from Mexico to Southeast Asia, The Carribean, and Europe.

1500S

When tomatoes were first introduced in Europe, they were believed to be poisonous because they are related to poison plants in the nightshade family, and because some ... eating off of lead plates. Even though some began eating this tasty fruit, in England people remained scared, and English Colonists in America still held onto this belief.

1692: The first known tomato recipe was published in a cookbook in Naples, Italy. At this time, eating tomatoes had caught on in France, Spain and Italy.

1700S

1792: Thomas Jefferson wrote about people growing showing the ... tomatoes in the Colonies, so even though many were still scared of the fruit, we know that some were eating it in the United States by then.

#4: Draw a li... showing the ... tomatoes ... Europe b... America

Today, tomatoes are a popular fruit. 1.5 billion (1,500,000,000) tons are grown and sold around the world.

The top producing countries are:
1. China
2. India
3. The US
4. Turkey
5. Egypt
6. Iran
7. Italy
8. Brazil,
...
7. Spain
10. Uzbekistan

#5: Can you find and mark all thes... countries on a ma...

THIS MONTH'S FOOD:

www.nhharve

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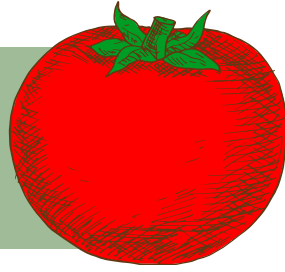
Name: _____

Tomato Count
How many seeds do you think a tomato has?

At the Farmers Market (or a grocery store), purchase a variety of tomatoes including tomatoes of different sizes/shapes, colors, etc. Take the tomatoes home and make a prediction of how many seeds are in each one. Then, cut the tomato in half, scoop out the pulp, and count the seeds. Record your data in the table below and then answer the follow-up questions on the next page.

Type of Tomato	Predicted # of Seeds	Actual # of Seeds	Difference between predicted & actual

Questions:

1. Calculate the average (mean) number of seeds among all of your tomatoes.

2. Why do you think some tomatoes have more seeds than others?

3. Why do you think tomatoes have so many seeds (why do they have more than just 1 or 2)?

4. Examine the seeds, some may be really small and not able to germinate. If 95% of the seeds are viable and germinate to produce seedlings, how many plants would you expect to get for each tomato?