MAD LIMBS - A story of fruit trees in Montezuma County

The year was ________.

A group of covered ________ made the long and arduous journey from Missouri to Colorado. In the ________, there were _______, and _______, and ________ and things like that. But there were also fruit trees! There were 100 ______ trees, plus some ______, ______, ______, ______, and ______ trees, too.

Once these fruit trees arrived in Western Colorado (just a little north of here) they were ______. But they were experiments. Growing fruit trees was a new adventure: no one knew if these trees would grow and produce at a high elevation, in a different climate. With time, the trees did in fact grow! Their ______ extended, their ______ stretched Up and out. The ______ shone and the trees converted this light to energy. It ______ sometimes, but not regularly enough for these trees. To solve this dilemma, the farmers decided to set up irrigation systems that carried water from the rivers to the trees. With this consistent water, the trees grew leaves; their flowers ______ and bees visited.

The bees flew from tree to tree, transferring ______ as they went. After the blossoms were ______ they fruited!

When the farmers realized that certain fruit trees could thrive and produce in western Colorado, they wanted to grow more. So they ______ their trees. ______ creates a copy of a tree. To______, the farmer would take a twig from one tree, the tree they wanted to copy. They connected this ______ to the ______ of different tree.

Now this was a tricky process, and it didn’t always work.

Farmers here discovered that the high elevation with its warm ______ and colder _____ made their fruit sweeter.

Soon enough, there were lots of orchards throughout the county. All of the different types of ______ looked and tasted different.

By ______, there were 48,630 ______ trees in Montezuma County. From 100 trees to 48,000 trees. Business was good, and farmers made lots of ______ for their unique tasting fruits.

As time went on, people wanted all of their ______ to look the same. In the northwest, the state of Washington began producing lots and lots of ______ that were bright, red, and uniform in size. Because this is what people wanted. The growers in Southwest Colorado began planting the same trees, but they didn’t grow as well in our climate. Growing ________ in Montezuma County was no longer a profitable business. _______ growers stopped

tending to the orchards in southwest Colorado, and found new ways to make money, like ________. For years and years, the trees sat.

Fast forward to RIGHT NOW.

Across the country and the world, people are again starting to appreciate apples and other fruits with unique tastes. They are also seeing the importance of having many types of the same tree – or diversity. This diversity is especially important as our climate changes. Certain traits that we don’t value in trees right now may be very valuable in the future.

But here’s the problem. The fruit trees - those trees whose fruit won gold medals for having the most delicious in the whole world- are reaching the end of their lives. They’re very old. Luckily, there are people in our area who have taken an interest in restoring the orchards and saving the fruit trees. These people have created the Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project to help bring our orchards back. This project uses grafting to make copies the old trees so that they can continue to grow. In reality, these new trees are hundreds of years old. That’s really special!

Thanks for learning!