

Smudge Pot



Each month The California Museum introduces a new artifact with accompanying information and questions, which consist of three different difficulty levels to choose from. To be used as a sponge or opening activity, you can use the artifact of the month for your students to study, question and form ideas. You can also print the image and place it on each student's desk, have them work in teams or project the image for a class activity.

Use the provided questions to help your students learn more about the artifact and its importance to California -- or make up your own questions. Most importantly, have fun!

Be sure to check out our web site, CaliforniaMuseum.org, for other interesting and unique activities for your students.

Smudge Pot



A smudge pot is an oil-burning device used to prevent frost on fruit trees. Generally a smudge pot has a large round base with a chimney coming out of the middle of the base. Growers used to place smudge pots between trees in an orchard; the heat and smoke from the burning oil kept the air just warm enough to prevent frost from forming on the trees.

Growing citrus is a very big part of California's agricultural economy. The Spanish missionaries who founded the missions in California were some of the first people to grow citrus in the state. With the growth in population during the Gold Rush, commercial citrus production also grew, to supply the miners with fresh oranges. Citrus production boomed with the introduction of refrigerated railroad cars in the 1880s, allowing the state's fruit products to be marketed throughout the nation. As citrus growing became a large and highly profitable industry in California, smudge pots were created to keep citrus groves warm in cold weather. California usually had the perfect climate to grow citrus, but freezes could happen and growers did not want to risk losing their harvest and possibly a fortune.

Around the 1970s, smudge pots fell out of favor as oil prices rose and as increased environmental awareness made people realize that the smoke produced by the pots was unhealthy.

Smudge Pot



Elementary

- 1) When was citrus first grown in California?
- 2) In what type of weather did they use smudge pots?

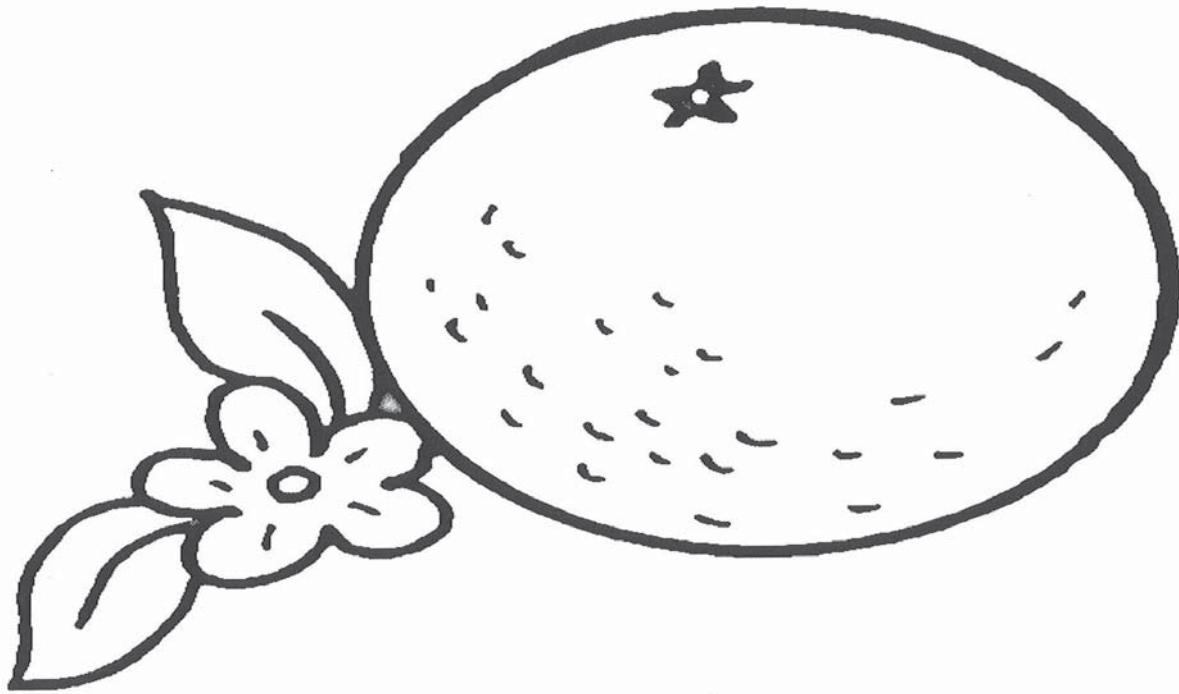
Middle

- 1) What are some modern methods that could be used today to keep plants warm?
- 2) Why is California a great place to grow citrus?

High School

- 1) What are some other industries that might have started to grow with the extension of the railroads?
- 2) Besides freezing weather, what are some other hazards that a grower would need to watch out for and what could they do to prevent them?

Color Your Own Orange!



O is for Orange

