

Article: [Rediscovering Walbridge]

Classroom Discussion Questions College Level

What does the rediscovery of the Walbridge apple reveal about the importance of agricultural biodiversity? Consider what may be lost when commercial agriculture relies on a smaller number of varieties. What potential ecological, cultural, or agricultural value might exist in preserving heirloom crops?

How does technology change our ability to preserve agricultural history? DNA testing helped researchers identify the Walbridge apple after it had been considered extinct. How can genetic research contribute to both historical preservation and the future development of crops?

How should agriculture balance commercial efficiency with genetic diversity? The Walbridge apple likely disappeared from commercial production partly because of challenges associated with growing the trees. As researchers work to make the variety commercially viable again, what trade-offs should they consider between profitability, consumer preferences, genetic preservation, and agricultural sustainability?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 9-12

Why is preserving plant diversity important? The Walbridge apple was once widely grown but nearly disappeared as commercial orchards began growing fewer varieties. What could be lost when older plant varieties disappear, and why might preserving them matter for the future?

How can new technology help us learn from the past? DNA testing allowed researchers to identify an apple variety that was once thought to be extinct. What does this discovery show about the ways modern science can help us understand and preserve agricultural history?

Should agriculture prioritize efficiency or biodiversity? The Walbridge apple may have disappeared from commercial orchards partly because the trees were difficult to maintain. What factors should farmers consider when deciding which crops to grow, and is there value in preserving a variety even if it isn't the easiest or most profitable to produce?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 6-8

Why might it be important to save different kinds of fruits and plants? The Walbridge apple was once popular but almost disappeared. What could we lose when a type of plant disappears forever?

How did science help solve the mystery of the Walbridge apple? Researchers used DNA testing to discover that the tree belonged to a variety once thought to be extinct. What does this tell us about how technology can help us make new discoveries?

Why do you think some types of apples become popular while others disappear? The Walbridge apple had qualities people liked, but its trees were difficult for farmers to maintain. What things do you think farmers have to consider when choosing which fruits or crops to grow?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 1-5

Why is it important to protect plants that are rare or hard to find? The Walbridge apple was once thought to be gone forever. Why do you think people are excited that it was found again?

How did scientists figure out what kind of apple they found? They used DNA to identify the Walbridge apple. What are some other ways scientists can investigate something they don't recognize?

What makes one kind of apple different from another? The Walbridge apple has its own color, taste, texture and growing habits. What differences have you noticed between the apples or other fruits you eat?