

Farm Service Agency



FSA KIDS

A delicious alphabet of farm fresh food



A to Z

A is for apple. Apples are one of America's favorite fruits. Maybe that's because you can find fresh apples any time of the year, all over the country. Did you know that apples come in shades of reds, greens, and yellows? The top apple producing states are: Washington, New York, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

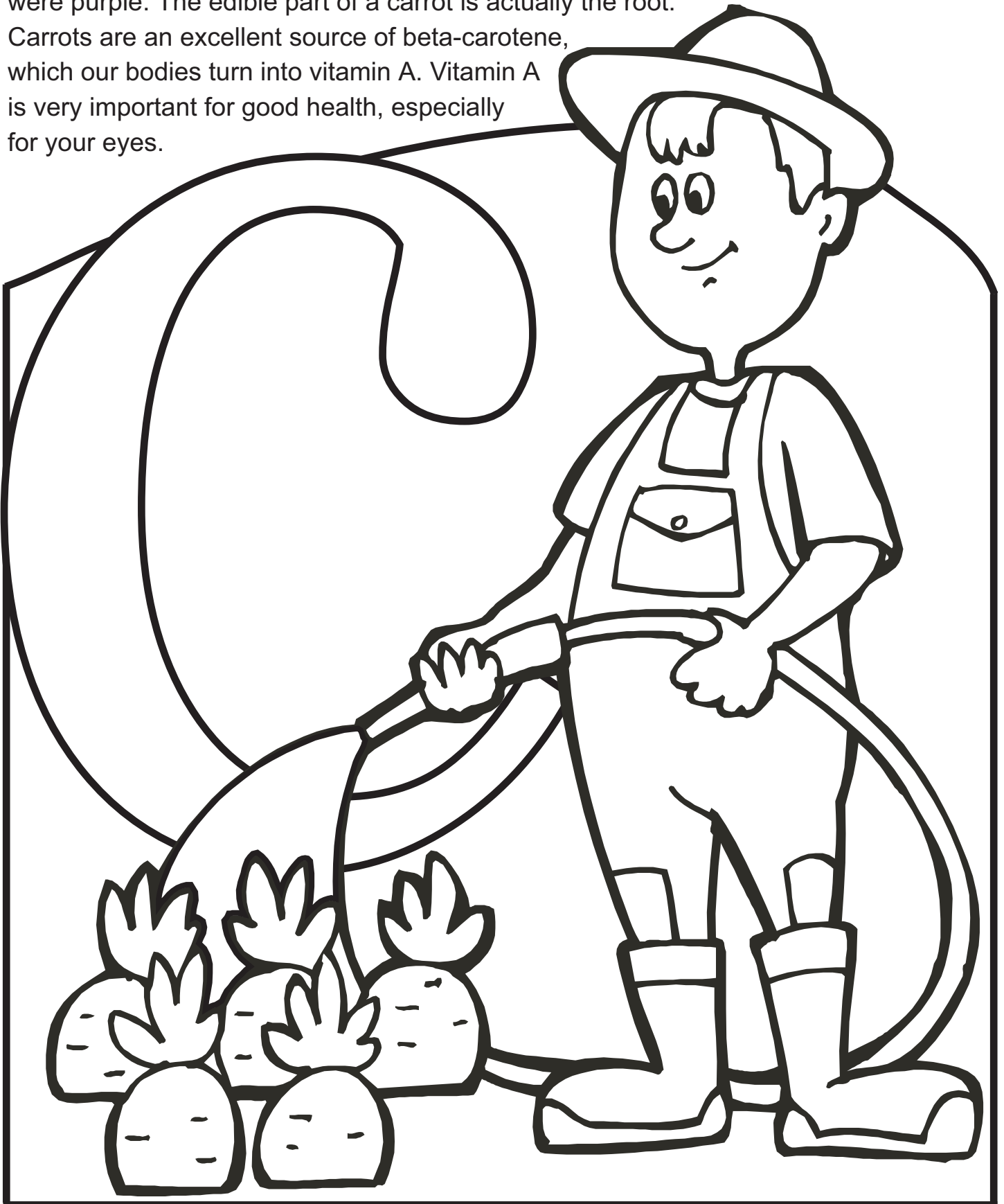




B is for barley - a type of cereal grain. Barley is grown for three major uses: livestock feed, malting and for people to eat. The amount of barley used as human food is small and mostly for use in soups and stews and some types of flour. The kernel must be "pearled" to remove the tightly attached hulls. Barley grows in 27 states in the US. Major producing states are: North Dakota, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Colorado, Wyoming, Virginia, Minnesota, Maryland, South Dakota, Oregon and Utah.

C stands for carrot. Carrots aren't always orange. They can be yellow, purple, white, red, green or black. Although no one knows for sure, it looks like the very first carrots were purple. The edible part of a carrot is actually the root.

Carrots are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which our bodies turn into vitamin A. Vitamin A is very important for good health, especially for your eyes.





D is for dates. Dates grow on female date palm trees. Although they grow in many countries around the world, in the U.S. almost all grow in California. The fruit clusters are covered with paper bags to protect them from rain and dust. And when the dates are ripe, they are harvested by hand.

E is for eggs. Eggs are eggs-citing! About 240 million laying hens produce 66 **billion** eggs each year in the United States. Did you know that yolk color depends on the diet of the hen? Natural yellow-orange food such as marigold flower petals can be added to the chicken feed to make a brighter color. Artificial color additives are not permitted! The top egg-raising states are: Iowa, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, California, Texas, Nebraska, Florida, Georgia and Minnesota.





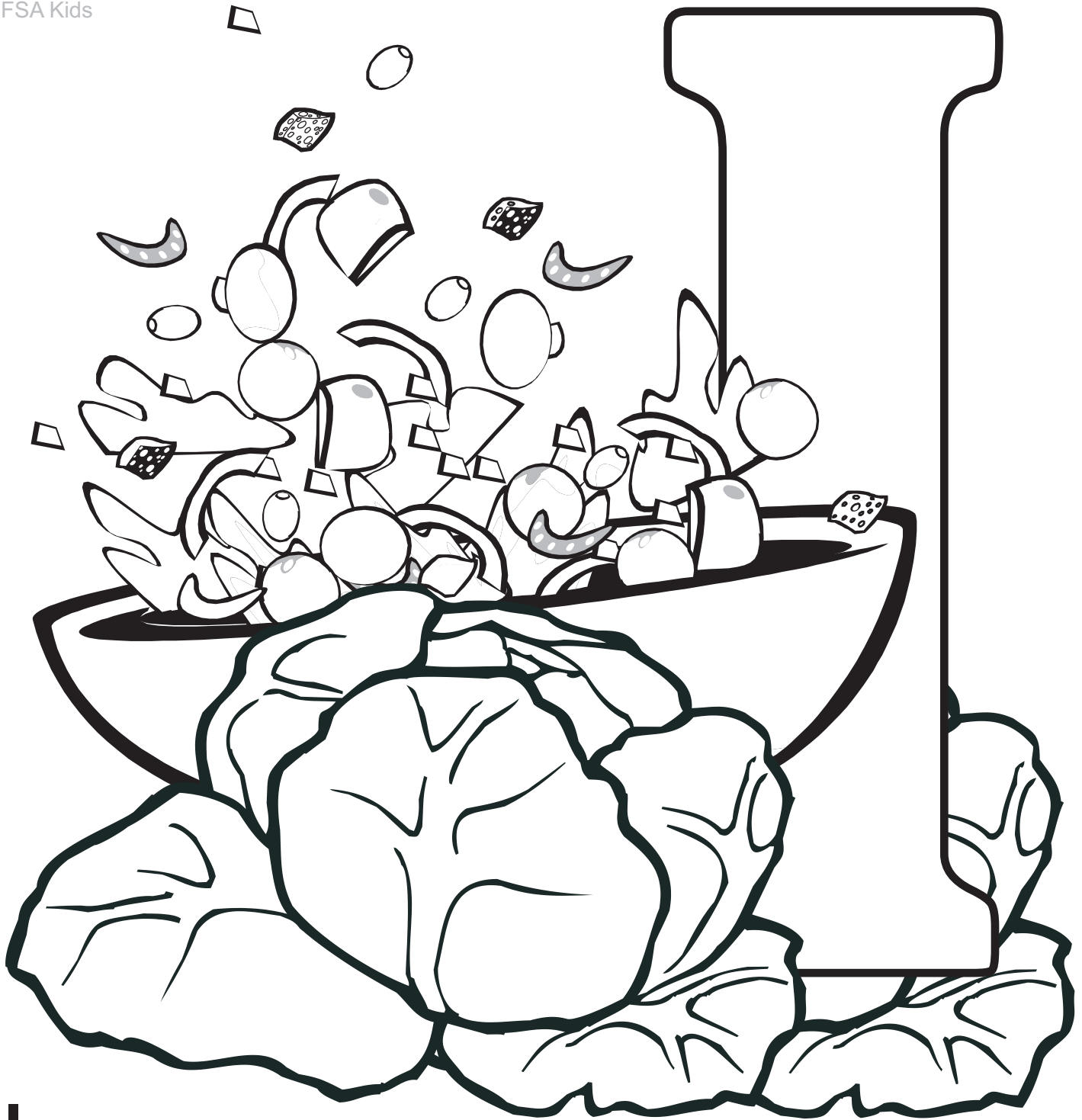
F is for fig. Figs are loaded with fiber - something everyone needs as part of a healthy diet. In the U.S. figs are grown mostly in California. Although we think of figs as a fruit, the fig is actually a flower that is turned inside out into itself. The seeds are the real fruit.

G is for grape. Grapes grow on a woody grape vine in clusters of 6 to 300. They can be black, blue, golden, green, purple-red and white. They can be eaten raw or used for making grape juice, jelly, wine, and grape seed oil. Raisins are the dried fruit of the grapevine, and the name actually comes from the French word for "grape". In late August, grapes are hand picked, laid on rows of poly paper trays in the vineyard, and allowed to dry naturally in the sun. After two to three weeks, a fresh grape becomes a sun-dried raisin.





His for hogs. Hogs are big business in the U.S. There are about 60 million of them across the nation! We rank number three in the world in hog production. And more than 2/3 of them are raised in the Corn Belt (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and parts of Ohio, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri and Kentucky). Texas has the largest population of wild hogs, estimated at about 3 million.

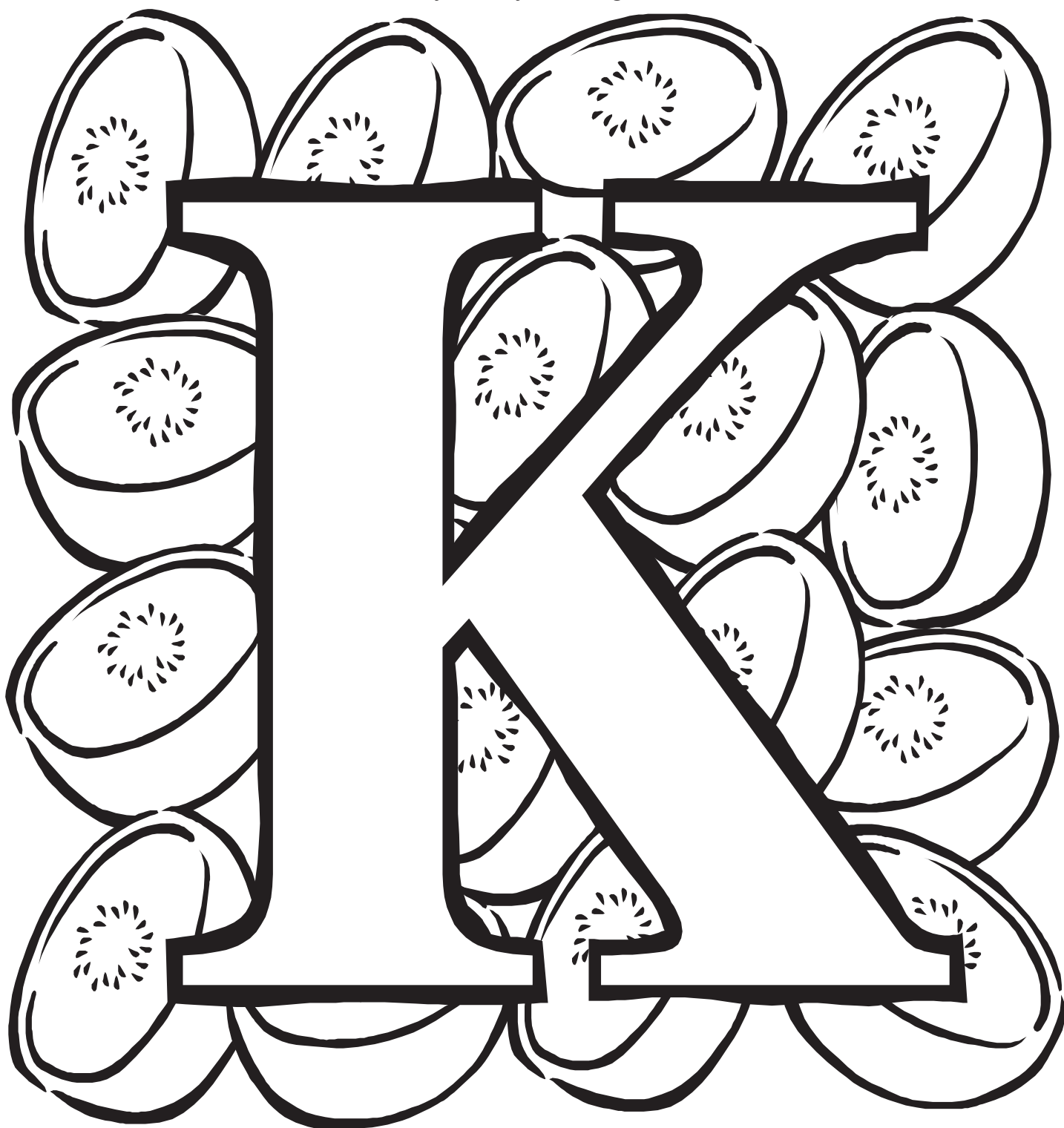


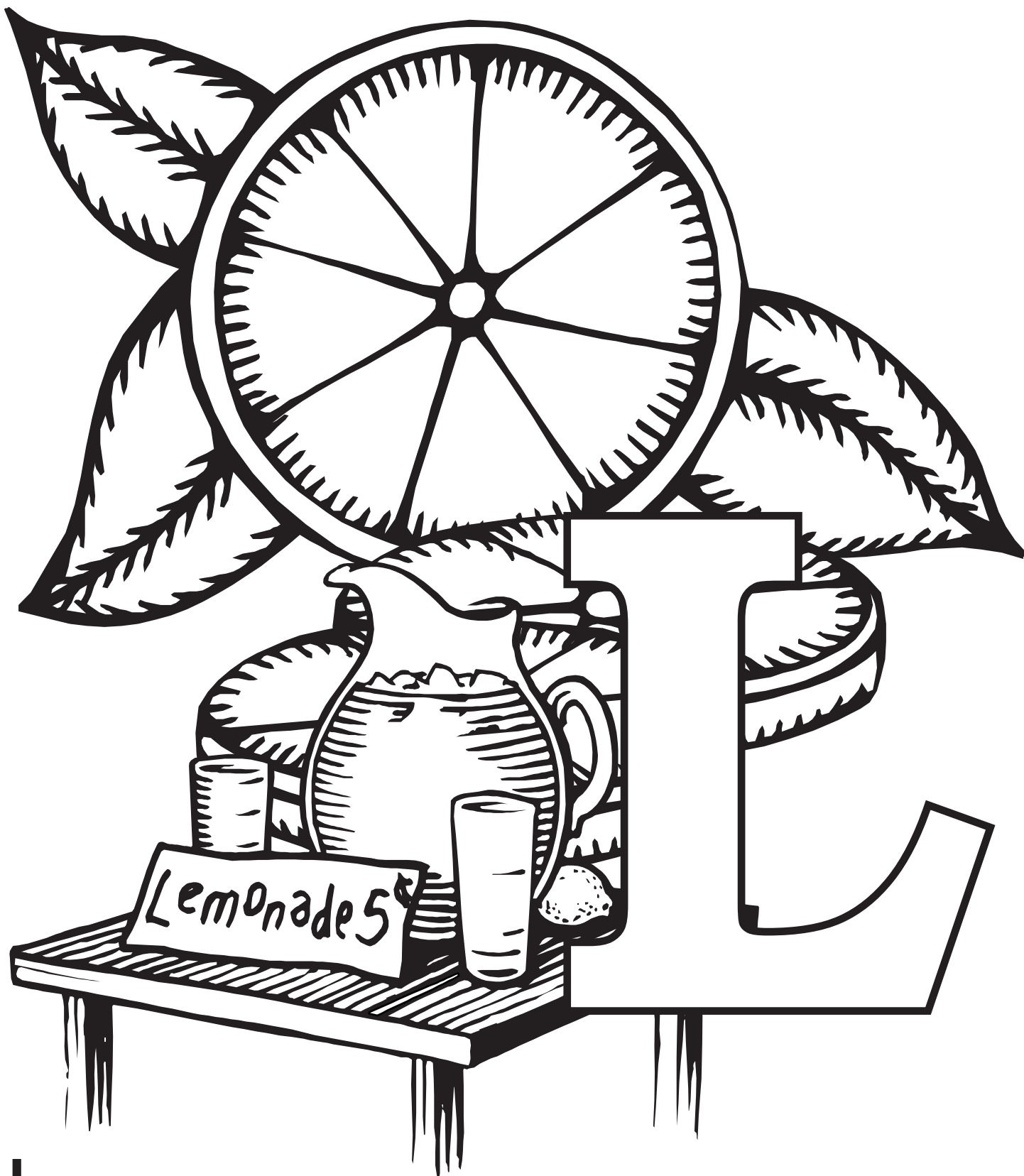
I is for iceberg lettuce. Americans love iceberg lettuce. We eat more iceberg than any other lettuce - about 30 pounds a person, each year. It may surprise you, but lettuce is a member of the sunflower family. In the United States, most lettuce is grown in California and Arizona. The name iceberg comes from the way the lettuce was transported in the US starting in the 1920s, on train-wagons covered in crushed ice, making them look like icebergs. Lettuce is also grown in Colorado, New Mexico, Washington, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Florida. Iceberg lettuce helps make salads and sandwiches taste great!

J is for jalapeño. The jalapeño is a small to medium-sized chile pepper prized for the hot, burning feeling it produces in the mouth when it's eaten. It is named after the Mexican city of Xalapa, Veracruz where it was traditionally grown. Many people make the mistake of drinking water when they find the pepper too hot. This actually makes it worse! The ingredient capsaicin is what gives the pepper its fire. It is not dissolved in water so it is spread around your mouth, if you drink water. The best thing to do is drink milk.



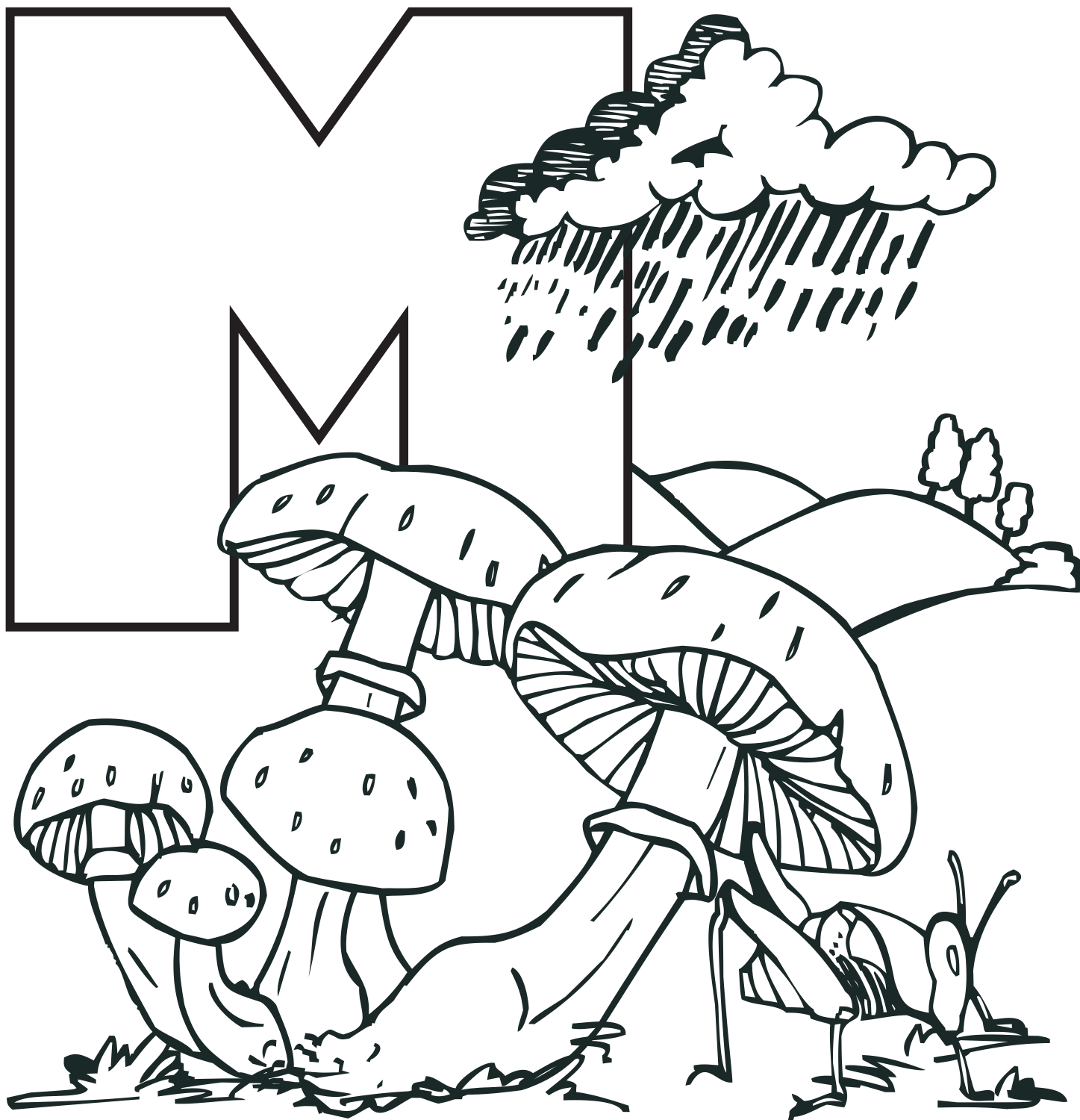
K is for kiwifruit. Kiwis started in the Chang Kiang Valley of China where they were considered a delicacy by the Khans who liked the fruit's flavor and green color. People in other countries learned about the fruit (called the "Chinese Gooseberry" to people who lived outside China) in the 1800s. The first experimental gooseberry plants were sent to New Zealand and the U.S. in 1904. Later, in the 1960s the fruit was renamed "kiwifruit" because it looked similar to the national bird of New Zealand, the kiwi bird which is a brown, fuzzy, funny-looking, round bird.





L is for lemon. If you've ever tried to eat one, you already know it is very sour! Mostly people use lemons for their juice. Lemon juice contains a lot of vitamin C and helps prevent the disease scurvy. The demand for lemons hit a peak during the California Gold Rush of 1849. Miners were willing to pay huge sums of money for a single lemon.

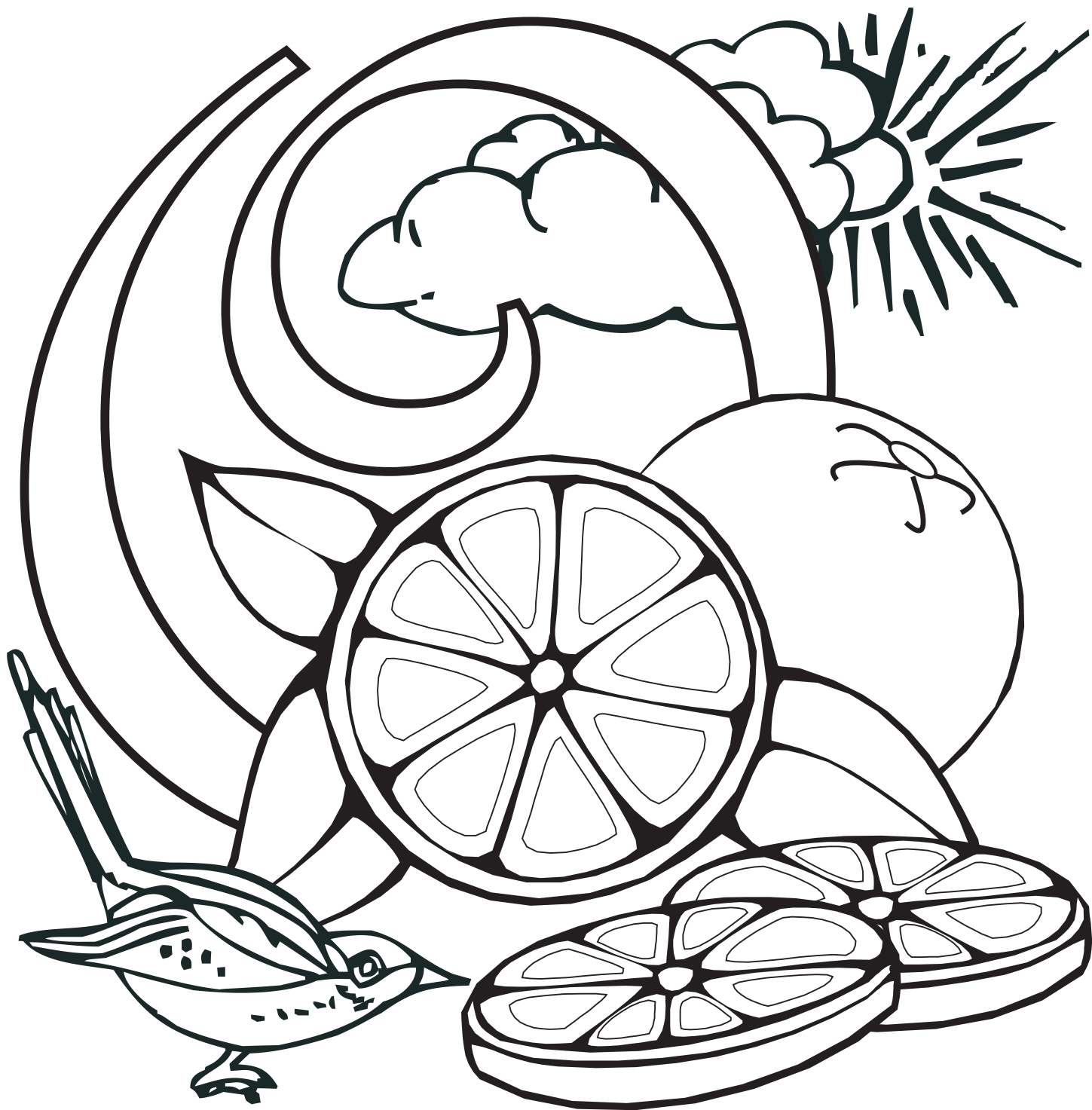
M is for mushrooms. Over 4,000 years ago the pharaohs of Egypt prized mushrooms so much that they decreed that only royalty could eat them. Today the mushrooms sold in your grocery store are grown by mushroom farmers in growing houses. Mushrooms have no chlorophyll (a green pigment in plants), so they don't need sunshine to grow and thrive. There are over 38,000 kinds of mushrooms with different colors, textures and flavors. Pennsylvania produces over 55% of the total U.S. production. **Danger:** Never pick or eat mushrooms you find growing wild in the woods because they may be poisonous.

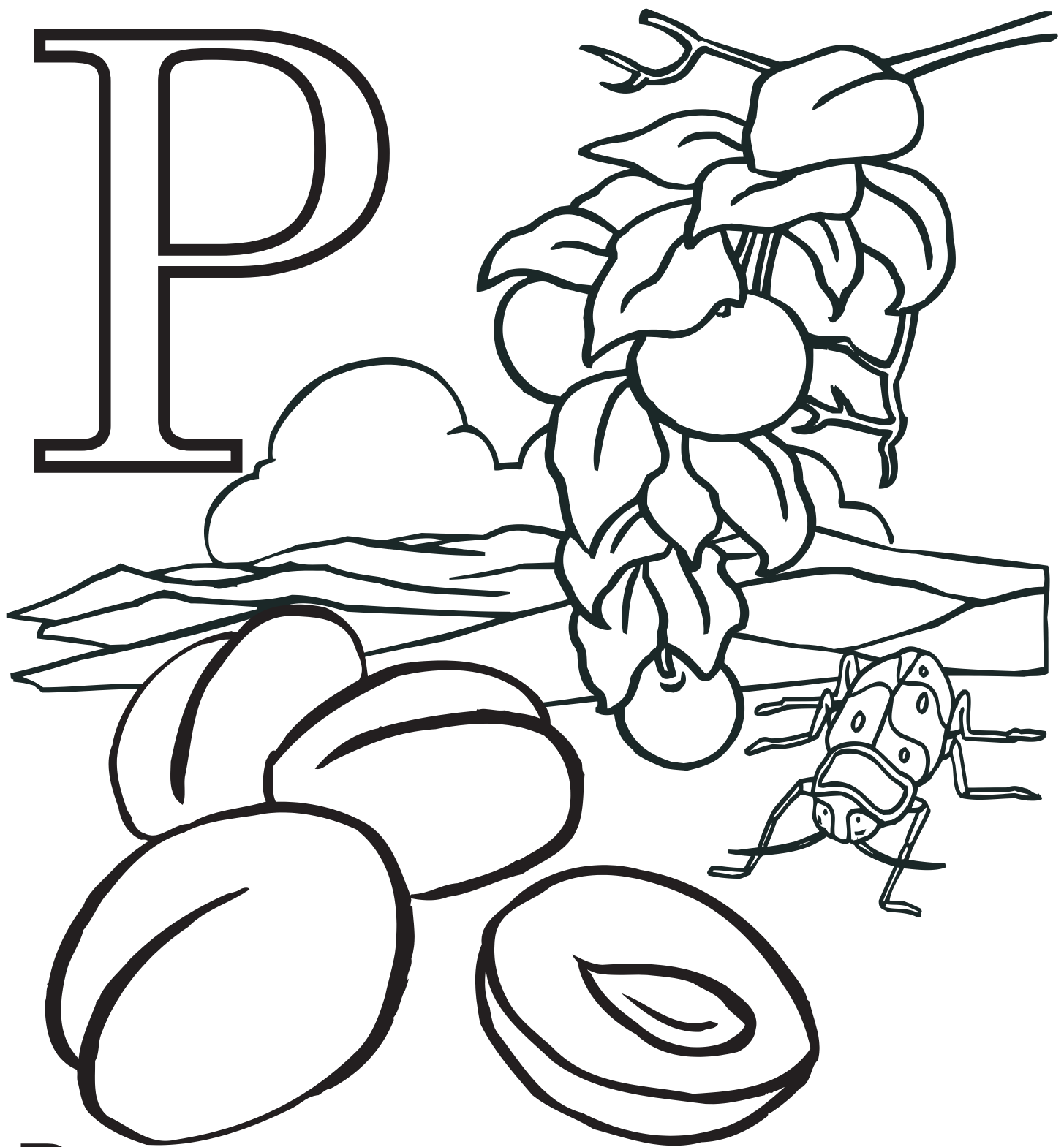




N is for nuts. Nuts are seeds that are covered with a hard shell. The pecan is the only tree nut native to North America. It is the state nut of Alabama, and the pecan tree is the state tree of Texas. Hawaii is the macadamia nut capital of the world, producing 90% of the world's supply. Did you know that peanuts are NOT nuts? They are actually legumes -- the same as peas and beans.

O is for orange. Orange trees are evergreens that can produce leaves, flowers and fruit all at the same time. They grow best in warm climates. Oranges do not ripen once removed from the tree. If ripe oranges are left on the trees too long they may turn from orange back to green in a process called re-greening. Oranges have been grown in the U.S. for about 125 years. Florida grows the most oranges, followed by California, Texas and Arizona. Brazil is the leading orange-producing country in the world. One orange contains all the vitamin C your body needs for the day!

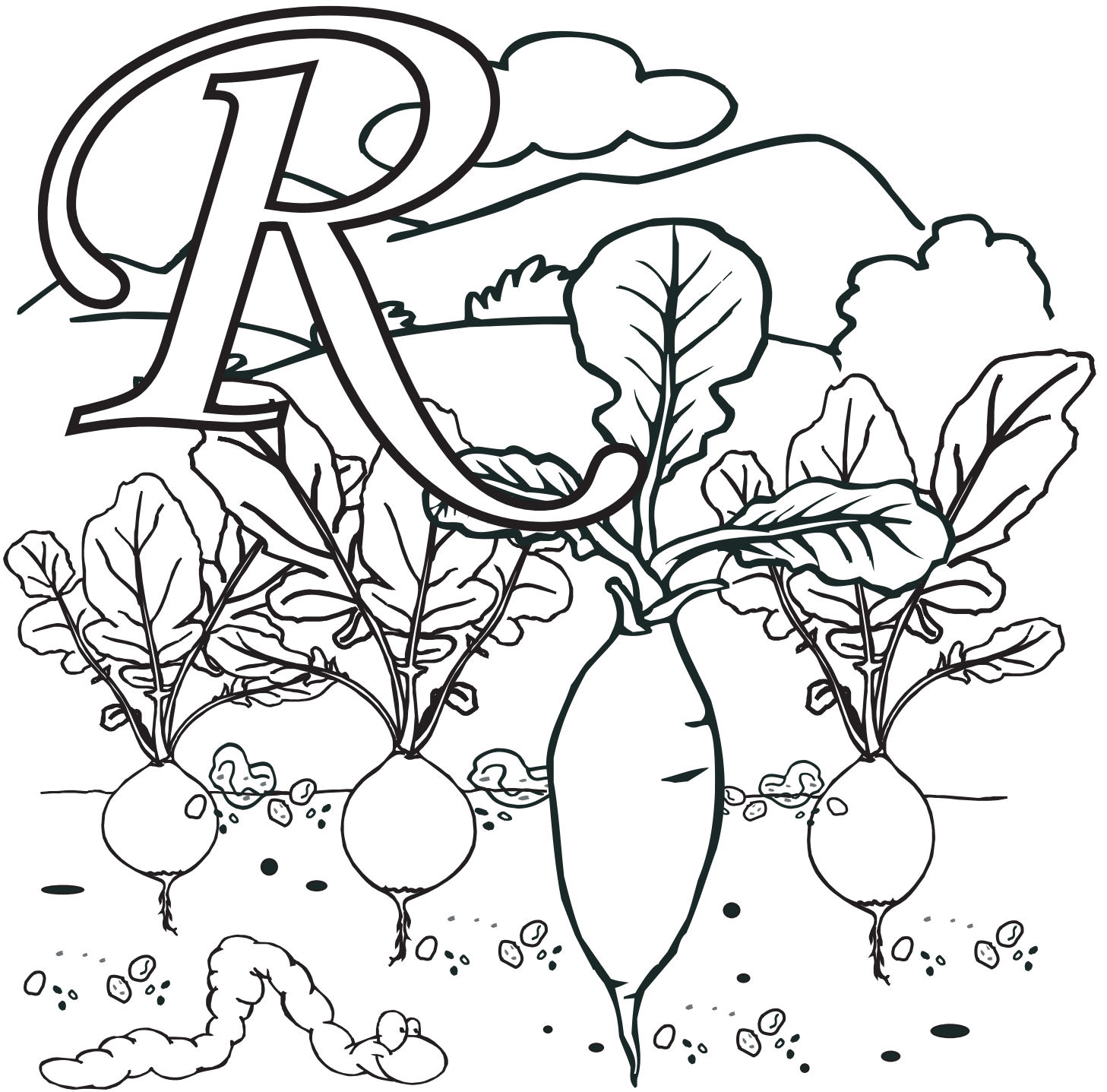




P is for plums. This sweet and juicy fruit can be eaten fresh, cooked for pies and jams, or squeezed for juice. Plums come in a wide variety of colors, sizes, flavors and textures. They are called “stone fruits” because the seed is large and hard. California is the largest producer of plums, growing more than 200 different varieties. In fact, California produces over 90% of the plums grown in the U.S., followed by South Carolina and Georgia.

Q is for quince. Although it looks like a pear in shape, color and appearance, the quince has a strong perfume-like fragrance and it is not a fruit you would want to eat raw, it is hard and bitter. When cooked and mixed with other fruits in pies, jams and jellies, quince adds a wonderful taste and fragrance. **Danger:** Quince seeds should not be eaten because they are poisonous.





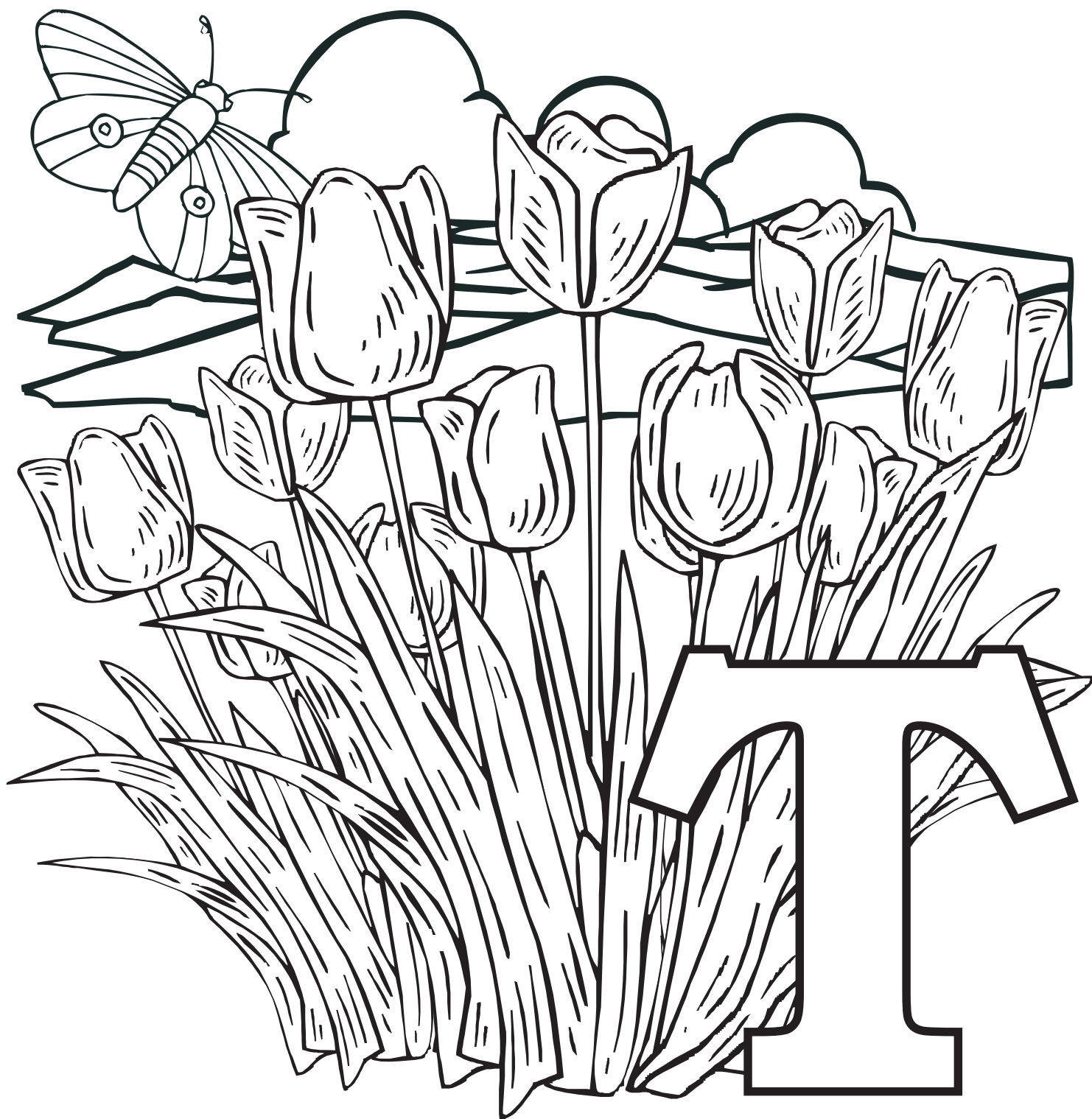
R is for radish. The radish is the root of a plant. Usually eaten raw in salads, radishes can also be stir-fried, pickled, microwaved, or used in soups. They come in several sizes, colors (white, various shades of red, and black) and shapes (round, oblong, and long). In the U.S. radishes are largely produced for the fresh market, and many consumers are only familiar with the red globe table radish. Florida is the leading producer, followed by California, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio. In Oaxaca, Mexico, radish-carvers vie for prizes on the Night of the Radish (Christmas Eve). The humble plants are transformed into holy figures, conquistadors, animals, and dancers.

S



S is for strawberries. Strawberries are the first fruit to ripen in the spring. American Indians were already eating strawberries when the Pilgrims arrived. They crushed the berries and mixed them with cornmeal to bake strawberry bread. After trying this bread, the colonists changed the recipe, and strawberry shortcake was born! The strawberry is the only fruit with its seeds on the outside. On average, there are 200 seeds in a strawberry. California produces 75% of the nation's strawberries, an amazing one billion pounds each year. If all the strawberries produced in California in one year were laid berry to berry, they would go around the world 15 times!

T is for tulips. Cut flowers, like tulips, are just one type of nursery crop grown in the U.S. Tulips come in an incredible variety of colors, heights, and flower shapes. There are more than 3,000 different kinds of cultivated tulips. Washington State is the largest producer of tulip bulbs, but there are over 7,000 nursery operations in 17 states that produce around \$4 billion in sales each year of shrubs, plants, shade and flowering trees, fruit and nut plants, and ornamental grasses. California, Florida and Oregon are the top nursery crop producers.



U is for uniq fruit. It's also known as an Ugli fruit. Americans pronounce the name "ugly," but in Jamaica, where it is grown, its name is pronounced "HOO-gee." This lumpy-looking uniq citrus fruit has a thick greenish-orange skin that fits loosely over the fruit. It is thought to be a tangerine – grapefruit hybrid. Sweet and refreshing, it is easy to peel, relatively free of seeds, and very juicy once cut. Uniq fruit is high in fiber and loaded with vitamin C.



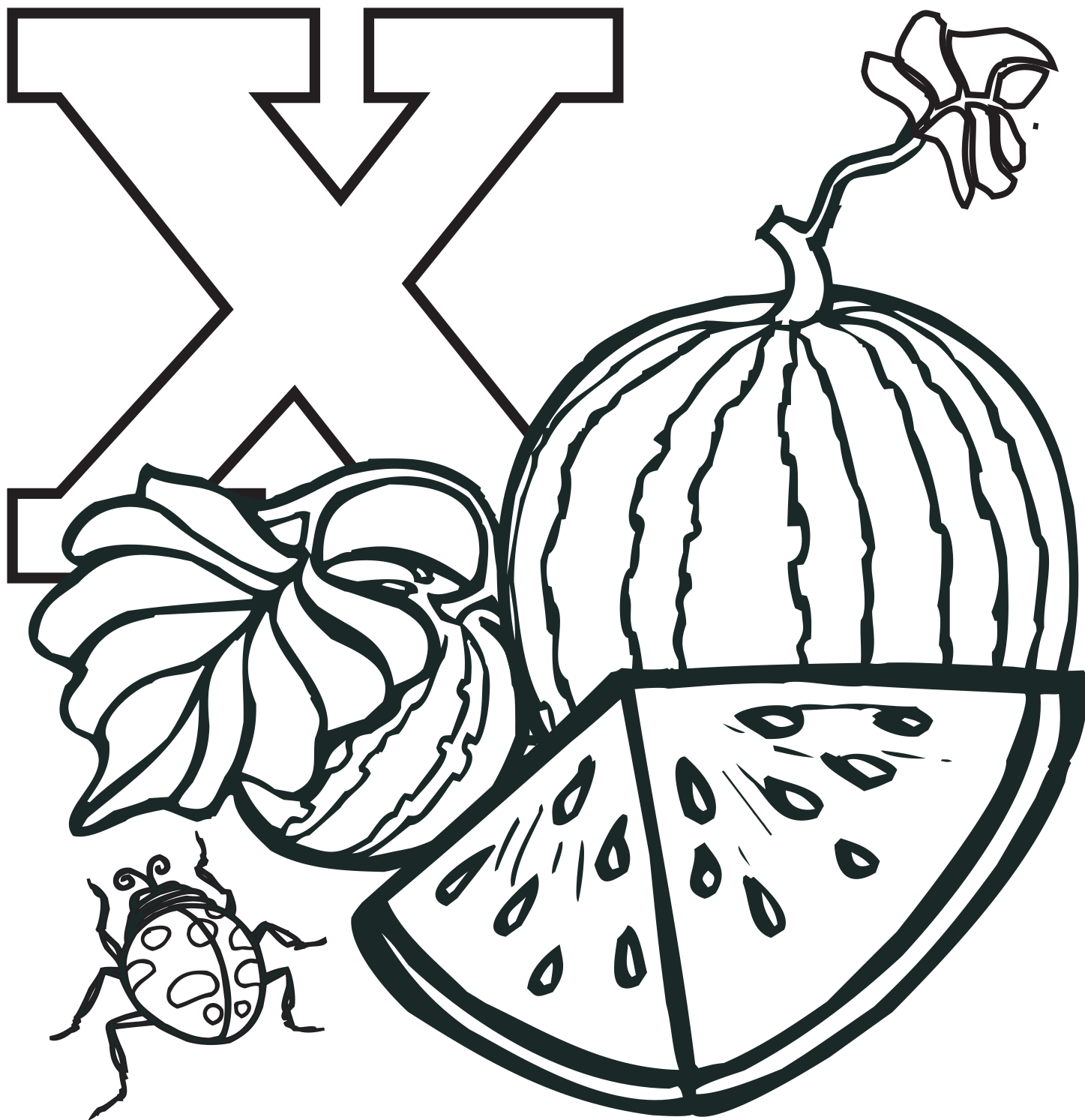


V is for vegetables. Vegetables are eaten as part of a meal or as a snack. Fresh vegetables contain vitamins and minerals, are low in fat, and provide the fiber your body needs to stay healthy. Vegetables come in different forms. There are leafy kinds, like lettuce; those with stems, like asparagus; and others with roots, like carrots. There are also flower vegetables, like broccoli; fleshy, immature seeds, such as peas and beans; and botanical fruits, like cucumbers, squashes, pumpkins, and avocados. You should eat lots of vegetables each day.

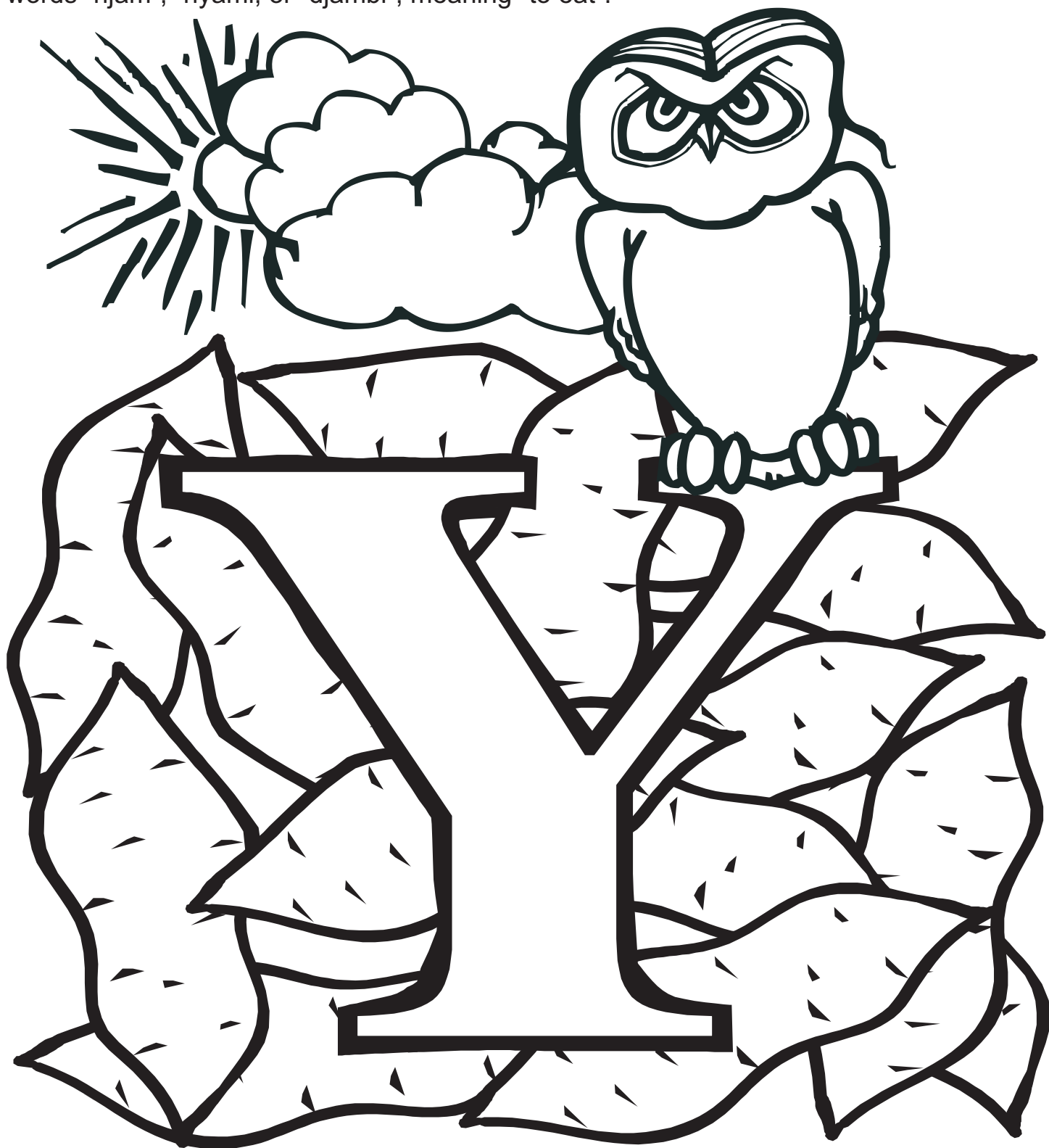


W is for wheat. Wheat is a plant that is a member of the cereal family of plants that also includes rye, corn, oats and rice. Wheat flour is the main ingredient in most breads, bakery products, biscuits, cookies and crackers, and the main ingredient in most noodles and pasta. A bushel of wheat weighs about 60 pounds, and when processed at the mill, a bushel produces about 42 pounds of white flour. The top wheat producing states are Kansas, North Dakota, Montana, Oklahoma, and Washington.

X is for xigua, (pronounced she-gwah) and it is a Chinese name for watermelon. It is closely related to cucumbers and squash and is 92% water. Watermelon is the most consumed melon in the U.S. Juicy and sweet, there are over 1,200 varieties grown all over the world. The largest watermelon on record weighed 262 pounds! Florida, Texas, California, Georgia and Arizona are the top watermelon producing states, but China is the world's largest producer of xigua. Did you know that watermelon rind is also edible? In China it is used as a vegetable and the seeds are eaten as a snack.



Y is for yam. Grown in the U.S., yams are an orange-fleshed variety of sweet potato, but in the rest of the world, yams and sweet potatoes are two very different plants. Rarely found in U.S. markets, the yam is a popular vegetable in Latin American, Africa, and the Caribbean. Over 150 varieties are available worldwide. Generally sweeter than the sweet potato, yams can grow over seven feet in length. The word yam comes from the African words “njam”, “nyami, or “djambi”, meaning “to eat”.

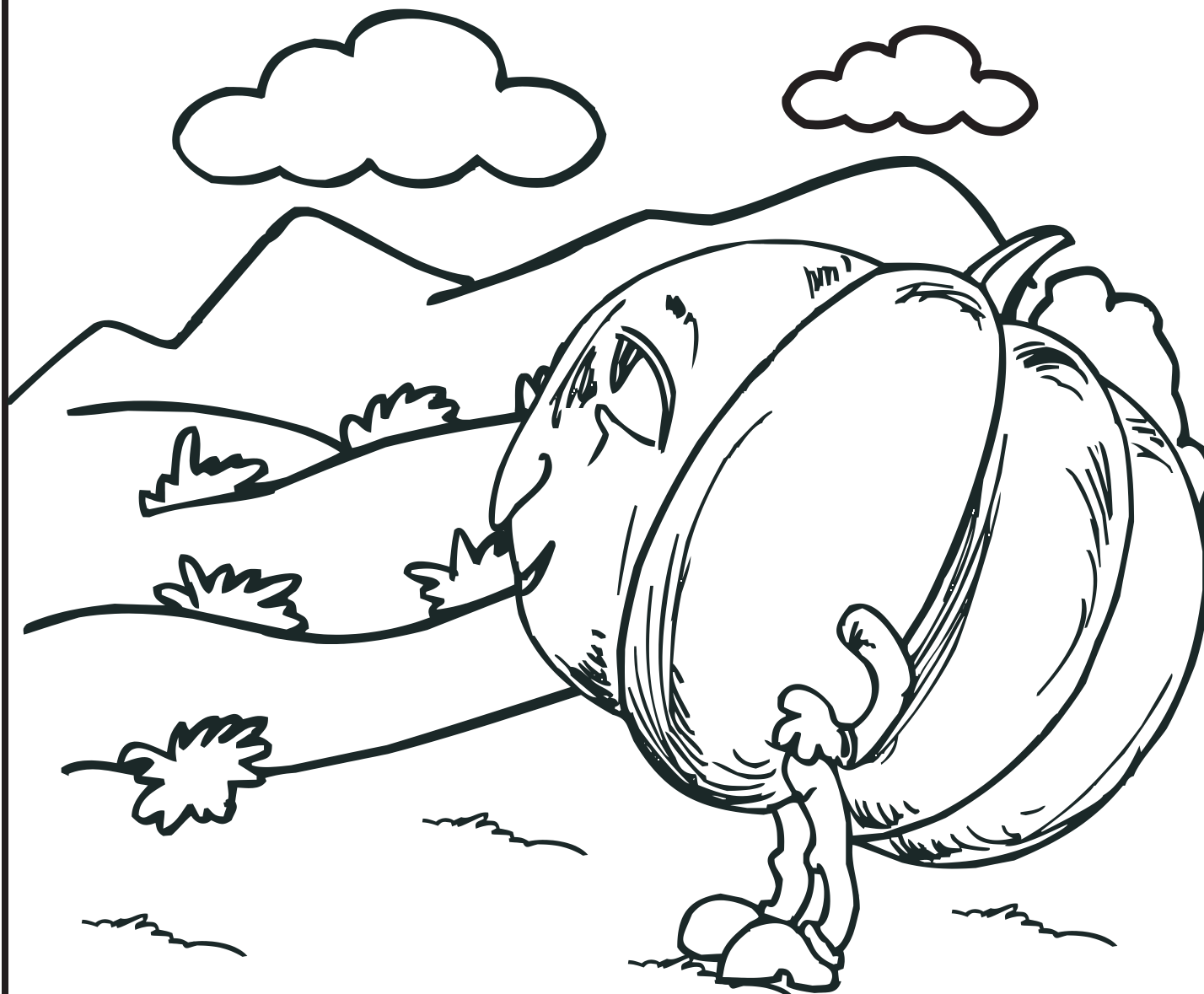




Z is for zucchini. Zucchini is part of the summer squash family. Zucchini come in different shapes, from long and narrow to short and round. Zucchini range in color from dark green to lighter shades of green and yellow. Some have stripes, and many are highlighted with speckles. Zucchini squash is so plentiful in home gardens that there is an 'official night' for getting rid of it: National Sneak Some Zucchini On To Your Neighbor's Porch Night (August 8).

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