

CSFP Newsletter – Spring 2023

Nutrition Information, Recipes and Resources for Minnesota Seniors

Thyme To Garden

As the Minnesota winter finally yields to spring, many will find themselves back outside planting, pruning and playing in the garden.

Getting outside and playing in the dirt and tending to flowers, vegetables and herbs and watching them grow from seed, provides a sense of peace and achievement that can keep anxiety and depression at a distance.

There is scientific evidence that gardening can increase self-esteem and reduce feelings of anger, sadness and stress. It also creates social opportunities and keeps people involved with their communities through group gardens.

All of these features are critical for maintaining positive emotional health.

Gardening Keeps The Brain Sharp

Planting a garden can improve brain nerve growth factors related to memory and can improve functioning in the section of the brain that is critical for memory.

Gardening helps combat low mood and increases feelings of joy and happiness, all of which contribute to a healthier and more resilient brain.

Gardening Is Good For the Hands

Although planting, watering, mulching, weed pulling and harvesting may not seem like much of a workout, they do promote hand strength. It can help improve dexterity and those who suffer from arthritis may find it helps lessen the symptoms.

Other Health Benefits

In a study of 15 women who were over 60, low-to-moderate physical exertion while gardening decreased their cholesterol levels, blood pressure and oxidative stress in the body. It also showed reduced morbidity and mortality rates in those with cardiovascular disease.



Days to Celebrate in 2023

June – National Dairy Month

- 1st – World Milk Day
- 3rd – World Bicycle Day
- 19th – Juneteenth Day
- 18th – Father’s Day

July - National Blueberry Month

- 4th – Independence Day
- 7th – World Chocolate Day
- 14th – National Mac & Cheese Day
- 20th – National Moon Day

August

- 1st – National Night Out
- 4th – National Coast Guard Day
- 9th – National Book Lovers Day
- 21st – National Senior Citizens Day

MN Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program

Checks are available for use from July through October 2023. To find out if you’re eligible to receive these benefits of locally grown Minnesota produce, contact your local CSFP distribution agency.

Gardening For Beginners

Selecting the Right Location

- **Sunny Spot:** If growing vegetables, most of them need 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight each day. Leafy vegetables will tolerate some shade.
- **Drains well:** Having wet soil means having wet roots, which leads to having rotted roots. Make sure you have soil that doesn't "pool". If needed, plant the vegetables in a raised bed to help with drainage.
- **Nutrient-rich Soil:** The soil feeds the plants. If the soil is thin and lacks nutrients, the result will be poor, unhealthy plants.

Choosing the Right Vegetables

- Choose vegetables you and your family enjoy.
- Be realistic about the quantity of vegetables that will be eaten. Do not overplant.
- Use high quality seeds. A few extra pennies spent in spring will pay off in higher yields at harvest time.
- Be willing to take care of the plants during prime gardening season.

Top Five Easiest Vegetables to Plant

1. **Lettuce:** Grows well in spring and in the fall. It also grows fairly quickly, so plant a small amount of seeds at one time.
2. **Zucchini:** There are two kinds of zucchini: summer squash (harvested in summer) and winter squash (harvested in the fall). Plant zucchini from late May to early July.
3. **Carrots:** Plant seeds in soft, light soil and in early spring. Varieties of carrots include Belgium Whites, Purple Dragon and Parisian heirlooms, which are round, not what is traditionally seen at the grocery store.
4. **Green Beans:** Other names include "string beans" or "snap beans". They are a warm season crop and grow best when air temperatures range from 65°F to 85°F
5. **Tomatoes:** They are warm weather plants and need plenty of sun to thrive and grow. The seeds are best sown under cover in March and April ready for harvesting from July to September.



Planting Tip

Mix Marigolds into the garden to discourage pests, attract pollinators and add vibrant colors throughout!

References:

- Vegetable Gardening for Beginners*. (2023, April 30). Almanac.com. <https://www.almanac.com/vegetable-gardening-for-beginners>.
- Park, S. A., Lee, A. Y., Park, H. G., Son, K. C., Kim, D. S., & Lee, W. L. (2017, January). Gardening Intervention as a Low- to Moderate-Intensity Physical Activity for Improving Blood Lipid Profiles, Blood Pressure, Inflammation, and Oxidative Stress in Women over the Age of 70: A Pilot Study. *HortScience*, 52(1), 200–205. <https://doi.org/10.21273/hortsci11232-16>
- Scott, T. L., Masser, B. M., & Pachana, N. A. (2020, January). Positive aging benefits of home/community gardening activities: Older adults report enhanced self-esteem, productive endeavours, social engagement and exercise. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 8, 205031212090173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050312120901732>