

HARVEST *of the* MONTH

Seasonal snacks from garden to classroom

ASPARAGUS

— April, 2015 —



Harvest of the Month is a great way for youth and their families to explore, taste, and learn about seasonal vegetables and fruits - from the garden, in the classroom, on the plate.

FACTS & VARIETIES

Asparagus is a delicious perennial crop: plant it once and enjoy it for 20 years or more.

The young, tender stems of asparagus are the tastiest and best eaten when only minimally cooked. After the young spears are picked in early spring, the asparagus matures into an airy fern-like puff that changes to a golden color in the fall.

There are many varieties of asparagus including Mary Washington, Jersey Giant, Brock Imperial, Princeville and Purple Passion. The varieties bred in New Jersey have a great reputation!

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Asparagus is one of the most nutritionally well-balanced vegetables and provides a significant source of:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin K
- Thiamin
- Folicin

Eating asparagus has numerous health benefits that stem from the huge assortment of vitamins and minerals it contains. Asparagus spears are rich in B- complex vitamins, which help the body to fight infection. Asparagus also contains "inulin," which feeds the good bacteria in the stomach, helping the digestive system.

COOKING & EATING

Asparagus can be lightly sautéed or roasted by itself or added to stir-fries, omelets, and other recipes.

ROASTED ASPARAGUS

- 1 bunch fresh asparagus
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

Trim tough bottom 1/2 inch off of asparagus and discard. On a large rimmed baking sheet, toss asparagus with oil and garlic, lightly season with salt. Bake at 400°F for 10 minutes or until lightly browned and tender. Serve. (Optional: top with lemon juice or parmesan).

GROWING TIPS

Asparagus is planted early in the spring as soon as the soil can be worked and in an area with full sun. It is important to deeply weed the bed so that the plants will thrive for years without weed pressure. The plants are grown from "crowns" which are plants that have been growing for a year. The young shoots should be harvest each year but it takes approximately 3 years to get a good crop. Several local growers are planting and growing patches of asparagus, including a few of our City Schoolyard Gardens.

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Harvest of the Month is a program that highlights a locally available crop each month by providing a fresh, healthy snack in all six Charlottesville Elementary Schools. Students also learn about the crop in their schoolyard garden and classroom. Information on crop growing, nutrition, and preparation is shared with teachers and families. The goal of Harvest of the Month is to support healthy living skills that strengthen our youth and community.



City Schoolyard Garden is an independent non-profit organization that cultivates academic achievement, health, environmental stewardship, and community engagement through garden-based, experiential learning.