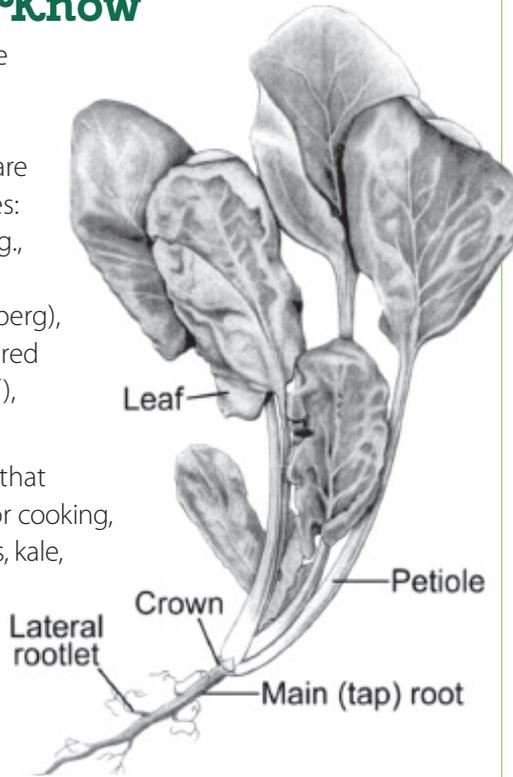


Classroom Bites

Leafy Greens

Did You Know

- While there are hundreds of varieties of lettuce, there are four main types: butterhead (e.g., Boston, bibb), crisphead (iceberg), looseleaf (e.g., red leaf, green leaf), and romaine.
- Most varieties that can be used for cooking, such as collards, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, and bok choy, are part of the cabbage family (Brassicae). Other varieties of greens, like Swiss chard, are related to the spinach family (Amaranthae).
- The average American eats about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about five times more than in the early 1900s.
- Salad greens may be one of the oldest known vegetables. There are pictures of wild forms of lettuce in Egyptian tomb paintings and written accounts of lettuce that date back to 79 A.D.
- Leafy greens are not a large part of Montana's agricultural landscape. Produce such as lettuce, spinach, collards, and chard only amount to about 13 acres of farmland across the state. However, they are easy to find at farmers markets and are great vegetables for gardens.



Gardening

Greens are perfect for growing in school gardens! Most greens (especially spinach) are quick growing, frost-tolerant, and generally easy to grow. Plant a variety of lettuce, chard, spinach, and other greens to make a "salad garden" and encourage kids to sample and compare the different types. Plant seeds directly in your garden 4-6 weeks before the last frost (be sure to read your seed packet for specifics on each variety). Lettuce can be planted in succession every two weeks to ensure a steady supply throughout the growing season.

Selection

Avoid greens that have brown, yellow, spotted, wilted, or slimy leaves.

Storage

Store greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 2-5 days. Romaine and leaf lettuce should be washed and dried before storing. Store greens away from fruits that naturally produce ethylene gas (pears, apples, bananas, tomatoes, and melons) as they will quicken spoilage.

Cooking

Prior to preparing, wash greens thoroughly in running water before using to remove any soil. Cooked greens reduce in size by 75-80% compared to fresh greens.

Blanch or Boil. Remove dried or thick stems. Bring water to a boil, enough to cover the raw greens. Add greens and blanch depending on type of greens: collards, 8-15 minutes; beet greens, turnip greens, and mustard greens, 5-8 minutes; chard, 2-4 minutes; baby greens, less than a minute. Cook until desired tenderness is reached.

Braise. Cut large greens and keep small greens whole. Remove dried or thick stems. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan, add low-sodium seasonings if desired. Cook greens over low heat for about 20 minutes or until desired tenderness is reached. This method is ideal for collards, chard, and kale.

Salad. Add a variety of raw greens to salads for added flavor, texture, and visual appeal. To serve tougher greens raw, massage the finely cut greens with acidic dressing. This will tenderize the greens and enhance the flavor.

Sauté. Cut large greens and keep small greens whole. Remove dried or thick stems. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan, add low-sodium seasonings if desired. Cook greens by stirring over high heat until desired tenderness, about 5-8 minutes. This method is ideal for spinach, collards, chard, bok choy, and mustard greens.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with basil, bay, celery seed, garlic, oregano, tarragon, or thyme.

Smoothie. Add fresh greens such as chard, spinach, or kale to smoothies for a nutrition boost.

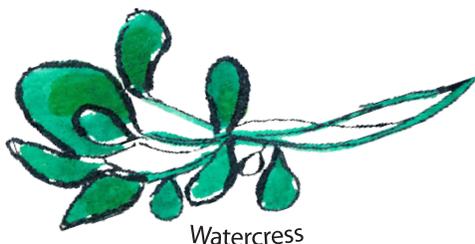
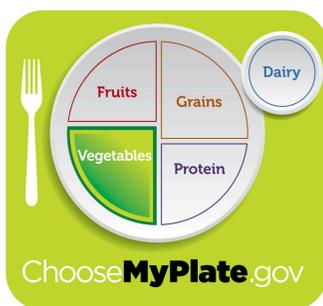
Soup or Entrée. Add greens to soups and entrees such as lasagna, quiche, or pizza.

Steam. Remove dried or thick stems. Place greens in a pan with a small amount of water and low-sodium seasonings. Cook on medium heat for 2-4 minutes (depending on size and age of greens), or until desired tenderness.

Adapted from the Leafy Greens Food Fact Sheet developed by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet and other resources, visit: <https://nutrition.msuextension.org/>.

Nutrition Information

As a general rule, the more green or vibrant the type of greens, the more vitamins and minerals it contains. While leafy greens have different nutritional profiles, most greens are good sources of folate, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and potassium. Most greens also provide vitamin K, which helps the body stop cuts and scrapes from bleeding too much and starts the healing process.



Watercress

Recipes

Easy as 1,2,3 Smoothie Recipe

This recipe is great for improvisation. The types of fruit, berries, or greens can be changed to suit your liking!

Developed by: Erin Jackson, Gallatin Valley Farm to School

Servings

3 - 16 oz or 24 - 2 oz samples

Ingredients

1 cup fresh greens
2 cups cold water
3 cups fruit

Preparation

1. Add greens, water, and berries/fruit to blender in that order. If greens are put in last it will be difficult to blend.
2. Blend until smooth, stopping to stir ingredients or scrape sides of blender as needed.

Simply Snazzy Salad

This salad is an easy and fun recipe for students to help prepare for any occasion! Experiment with different types of greens, or mix them for more colors and flavors!

Developed by: Kirsten Gerbatsch, FoodCorps service member

Ingredients

1 lb any type of salad greens or mixed greens
1/2 cup carrots, thinly sliced
1 cup dried cherries or cranberries
1 cup walnuts, chopped
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup olive oil
2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp honey

Servings

8-10

Preparation

1. Place greens, carrots, cranberries, and walnuts into a large mixing bowl.
2. In a small bowl, add balsamic vinegar, olive oil, mustard, and honey. Whisk ingredients together using a fork or whisk until smooth and evenly mixed.
3. Right before serving, pour dressing over the salad in the large mixing bowl. Gently toss the salad to coat all the ingredients.

Activities

Leafy Greens Exploration

Adapted from: *Growing Minds, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project*

This activity can be conducted with multiple varieties of any leafy greens.

Grades

K-4th

Objectives

- Guide students in using scientific inquiry to observe and learn about several varieties of leafy greens.
- Create a line plot to record the results of a class tasting; use the plot to further interpret the data collected with your class.

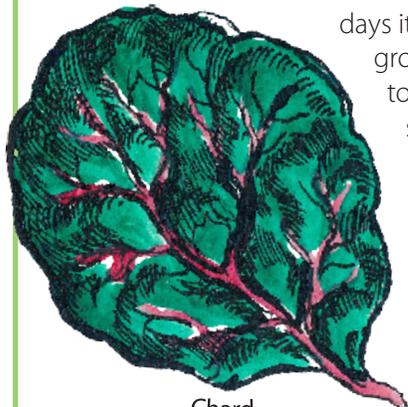
Supplies

- Lettuce and/or other leafy green seed packet
- Enlarged seed packet image
- Seed catalogue
- Magnifying glasses
- Rulers
- Three different varieties of greens (e.g., lettuce, chard, beet greens)
- White and colored paper
- Pictures of different greens
- Crayons/colored pencils
- Book: *And The Good Brown Earth* by Kathy Henderson

Directions

1. Introducing Leafy Greens: Farmers' Favorites

Explain that lettuce is a fast-growing vegetable, and for this reason is one of farmers' favorite vegetables to grow. Ask students to predict how many days it takes to grow lettuce and other leafy greens from seed to plant. Ask them where they would look to find the correct information. Show students a seed catalogue and seed packet. **For first and second grade classes:** give leafy greens seed packets to several students and ask them to read to find out how many days it takes for the leafy greens to grow. **For kindergarten,** point to the place on the enlarged seed packet where you can find the information. Were the students' predictions correct?



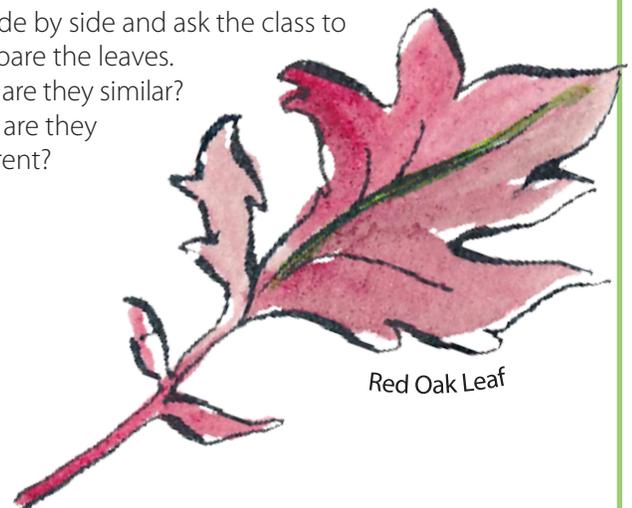
Chard

2. **Look, Describe, Write, Draw.** Ask students to wash their hands. Give each student one leaf of each of the three different varieties of greens. Ask students to look closely at the three types of greens. Give them magnifying glasses to examine more closely. Ask them to describe how each leaf looks and feels. Give older students rulers. How long is each leaf? Record the data on the observation chart with columns for feels, looks, tastes, and smells. Have older students write a poem about greens using the words in their observation chart. Read students the poem about cucumbers below. Can they substitute information about greens to make a new poem using descriptive words? After they write their poem, show them pictures of different types of greens. Have the students draw a border of greens and other greens around their poem.

A poem about cucumbers:

Green cucumbers growing on the vine
Oh so juicy, cool and fresh
We want so much
To chomp and munch
And hear that nice loud crunch!

3. **Taste & Line Plot.** Ask students to taste each leaf. Ask them to choose which type was their favorite. Record the data in a line plot. Describe what the line plot shows with the students – which type was the most popular? And the least?
4. **Garden Extension.** If you have leafy greens growing in your garden bed, take the class out to the garden and tell them you are going to pick a few leaves to observe. Leafy greens are leaves that we eat. Do the students see other leaves that we can eat? Pick a few other types of edible leaves. Do they see leaves we don't eat? Pick a few inedible leaves. Choose a few edible and inedible leaves. Hold them up side by side and ask the class to compare the leaves. How are they similar? How are they different?



Red Oak Leaf

Book Nook

From Seed to Plant,
by Gail Gibbons

Green Power: Leaf and Flower Vegetables,
by Meredith Sayles Hughes

Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French

Plants on My Plate, by Cathy Smith

Sell What You Sow, by Erica Gibson

The Tiny Seed, by Eric Carle



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: mtharvestofthemonth.org.



Spinach



Bibb Lettuce



Frisee Lettuce

4 Montana Harvest of the Month: Leafy Greens



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Organic Association, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org

Funds were provided in part by a USDA Team Nutrition Training grant, a USDA Farm to School grant, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Montana School Nutrition Association. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach. This publication was supported by the Grants or Cooperative Agreements Numbers, 6 U58DP004818-03-01 & 5 U58DP004818-03-00, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the DPHHS.