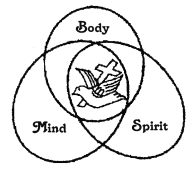




# Gardening for your Health

by Tammy Gallow, Parish Nurse

The benefits of a plant-based diet in improving our health  
Have been recognized since antiquity (See Daniel 1:3-16).



**God has given us a rich bounty of plants and herbs to enjoy and nourish our bodies.**

Today modern science continues to identify thousands of protective compounds such as phytochemicals and antioxidants that are found in the bounty of God's earth. What better way to increase our intake of fresh vegetables and herbs than a family garden. Consider planting complementing herb and vegetable combinations in your home garden. Pairing certain vegetables and herbs will maximize the harvest and nutritional benefits we reap from our gardens. For example, growing tomatoes and basil together increases the vigor and flavor of both crops while giving basil a respite from the sun. This combination forms the basis of many Italian dishes, salads and pesto. Also, tomatoes are rich in vitamin C and lycopene, known to reduce cancer risk. Other recommended pairings to save space and maximize yield are pepper plants with beets. Plant and stake your pepper plants and then sow a ring of beet seeds 8 inches from the base of each pepper. When you grow beets, you get a double bonus, since both the roots and greens are delicious and nutritious. Beets are loaded with folate and potassium as well as betacyanins, which give them their purple hue as well as their anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties. Beet greens are very high in vitamin A and C, and they have a delicious mild flavor. Try steaming or sautéing the greens with olive oil and a dash of lemon or tossing raw baby beet greens into a salad.

When planning your garden, don't forget to plant some green leafy veggies. Think beyond spinach and consider planting other varieties such as Swiss Chard and Kale. These varieties pack a nutritional powerhouse and continue to produce and mature in the cooler temperatures of the fall. Chard is very high in vitamin A, with one cup of chopped leaves providing over 200% of the recommended daily allowance. Chard is high in vitamin C and iron as well. In addition to the leaves, which can be eaten raw or cooked like spinach, the celery like stems are also delicious. Kale is rich in vitamins A and C, folate, iron and calcium. Kale can be eaten steamed, sautéed, or cooked into soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Herbs lend themselves well to container gardening. Food would be much less flavorful without the wonders of herbs. Herbs elevate any dish, be it scrambled eggs, salads, grilled vegetables, dressings or meat. Herbs are loaded with disease-fighting phytochemicals and are bursting with flavor. Herbs add a richness of flavors to food and thereby fill in the "flavor gaps" as we decrease our intake of fat, sugar, and salt from our diets. Herbs can help us with weight control as well, since meals that are bursting with flavor are more satisfying without adding a single calorie and help us to feel more satisfied with less food. Cooking tip: Fresh herbs should be added at the end of the cooking process, since adding them too early dilutes their essence and may diminish potency of healthful compounds in the herbs.

In addition to supplying us with a treasure chest of nutrient rich vegetables, gardening is great exercise and helps to connect us with our food source. As we connect with our food source through gardening, we also bond with our bodies and are more in-tune with what our bodies need to be healthy. Children who are involved in the planting, harvesting, and preparation of home grown vegetables are much more likely to enjoy the "fruit" of their labors. Gardening is an economical and fun way to build memories with your children or grandchildren, while laying a foundation of health.

## Roasted Beet Salad (serves 6 / Vegan)

- 8 medium beets, trimmed & scrubbed (1 ½ lb.)
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, minced (2 Tbs.)
- 6 C. mesclun greens or other salad mix
- 3 Tbs. prepared balsamic vinaigrette

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Toss together beets, olive oil, and garlic in baking dish.

Bake 40 min. or until beets are tender. Cool.

Scrape skin from beets with paring knife. Slice into rounds.

Toss greens with vinaigrette.

## Confetti Veggies with Dill

- ½ small head cauliflower (4 C. florets)
- ½ bunch kale (2 C. leaves)
- 1 green onion
- 1 carrot
- 2 Tbs. diced red bell pepper
- 2 tsp. arrowroot or cornstarch
- ¼ tsp. dry dill weed
- ½ C. reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- ⅛ tsp. black pepper (or to taste)
- \*add a couple Tbs. black beans if desired

Break cauliflower into small florets, discard stem area and leaves. Peel and dice carrots. Remove kale from tough stems, discard stems, and tear leaves into pieces. Dice bell pepper and green onion. Set aside.

Steam cauliflower and diced carrots, covered, for 4 min. or until crisp tender, add kale and steam 2 min. more. Set into bowl to keep warm.

Combine chicken stock and cornstarch; pour into a medium nonstick skillet and heat over medium to high heat. Mixture may be heated to boiling in microwave, if preferred.

Add bell pepper, green onion, dill weed, pepper and cook for 1 minute. Pour over the cauliflower, carrots and kale and toss all together.