WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 22, 2024
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about rhubarb, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

As a kid, the first plant I would see poking up around the shed at Grandpa's farm was rhubarb. Each spring the leaves would grow large, and the stalks would grow long as the first tiny wildflowers began appearing in the yard. Because rhubarb is a perennial plant, it was not kept in the garden. It had its own special bed.

According to the OSU Extension Fact Sheet, "Growing Rhubarb in the Home Garden," rhubarb was initially grown in the Far East for medicinal purposes over 2,000 years ago. Around the 18th century, the British and Americans began to use it in culinary dishes. We have the perfect weather for it here in Ohio. It requires winter temperatures below 40 degrees F to break dormancy and stimulate spring growth. It also needs summer temps that average less than 75 degrees.

The leafstalks are edible, but the leaves should not be eaten. If you've ever heard that rhubarb is poisonous, it is true that leaves contain oxalic acid. Many fruits and vegetables contain oxalic acid naturally. You would have to consume a few pounds of rhubarb leaves to be lethal.

We grow our rhubarb plants in a raised garden bed. Though it is clearly a vegetable, we tend to treat it more like a fruit when we consume it. Like many fruits, rhubarb contains anthocyanins, which are a type of antioxidant. The American Institute for Cancer Research says that anthocyanins have demonstrated protective effects on blood vessels and blood pressure, and recent research suggests that anthocyanins may offer anti-cancer benefits, too.

In addition to these health qualities, a half cup of cooked rhubarb provides more than one-third of the recommended dietary intake of vitamin K1. And it gives us two grams of fiber (which helps prevent colorectal cancer), as well as calcium and vitamin C.

If you have an overabundance of rhubarb, it is easy to freeze. Wash, trim, and cut into 1-inch lengths. Heat rhubarb in boiling water 1 minute and then place promptly in cool water to help

retain color and flavor. Then it can be packed into containers and cover with cold 40% syrup. Or it can be packed dry without syrup or sugar.

Many times, rhubarb will be paired with a sweet fruit to balance the natural tartness of rhubarb. Here is a delicious recipe from MyPlate.gov.

And now let's see what else is new from OSU Extension. Coshocton County 4-H has opportunities for youth to learn, make connections, and have fun this summer! Cloverbud Camp is for youth ages 5 and in kindergarten through 8 and in second grade as of January 1. Cloverbud Camp will be June 8 at Lake Park from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. The theme is "Going on an Olympic Adventure!" Cost is free per participant which includes lunch and snack. Registration is due to the OSU Extension office by May 31. Thanks to the Coshocton County Youth Financial Support Committee for their sponsorship of this program.

4-H Junior Camp is July 5–9 at 4-H Camp Ohio. Junior Camp is for youth ages 8 and in the 3rd grade on January 1 through those in 7th grade on January 1. Camp creates an experience of a lifetime for the campers, including new learning experiences, friendships, skills, and fun. Cost for Junior Camp is $135 for all campers thanks to a generous donation from the Coshocton County Youth Financial Support Committee. For questions or further information, please contact OSU Extension or our website coshocton.osu.edu.

Also, I am beginning to plan for food preservation classes this summer. I'll be offering a Freeze Drying class in July and a Canning Basics class in August. Both programs will be held at Schumaker Farms. Be on the lookout for more details in the next few weeks. And remember, you can email me or call me at the office with any food preservation questions you may have or to have your canner dial gauge tested.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and empower our families, individuals, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!