

Bite Newsletter

April 2010

In this issue:

[Get fit get well event](#)

[The Roby's new allotment session](#)

[New information for YASP](#)

[Bite venues](#)

[Seasonal fruit watch- rhubarb](#)

[Gardening jobs](#)

[Healthy eating spotlight- vitamin C](#)



Get fit get well event

On Wednesday Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust held a get fit get well event at Longford Park in Chorlton. The aim of the event was to promote physical health as a key component in maintaining mental wellbeing. There were many activities on the day including a 5k run and a six-a-side football tournament. Bite had a stall at the event to promote activities on offer and also had a stall outside where we gave out smoothies & juices to runners and football players.

The Roby's new allotment session

The Roby in Longsight will be running a fortnightly session at the Southern allotment on Thursday afternoons starting from the 22nd April, for more information on this activity or the Roby call Phil on 0161 2572653.

New information for YASP

YASP has developed a new online referral pack and form. This can be used for referral to any parts of YASP's services. There referral pack can be downloaded [here](#).

YASP Cafe has a developed a new leaflet to advertise its services, for copies of the leaflet please contact Martin on 01612213054.

Bite venues



Harpurhey Centre Green Fingers Project

In the last email bulletin I mentioned two new growing projects. One of these projects is at Harpurhey Centre & will be held every Monday afternoon 12-3 pm with lunch provided. The focus of the project will be to grow salads, herbs and fruit and it will be a good introduction to food growing. If you would like to find out more please contact the Horticulture project on 0161 9223446.

Seasonal vegetable watch - rhubarb



Rhubarb is one of the first crops that can be harvested in spring and is a sure sign of the coming new year of growth. Despite popular opinion it is a vegetable not a fruit and is closely related to the sorrel family. Rhubarb is a perennial plant, meaning that it continues to grow every year, getting larger every growing season. It is easy to grow but like many plants it prefers well drained, fertile soil.

Rhubarb can also be 'forced' which means it is grown in darkened conditions which makes the rhubarb grow very quickly & produces pinker stems than rhubarb grown naturally outside. You can see forced rhubarb in action in [candle lit growing houses in Yorkshire](#). The rhubarb grows that quick you can actually hear it!

Rhubarb's primary role throughout history has been medicinal rather than culinary. Indeed, widespread culinary uses began only two centuries ago. In contrast, medicinal uses go back at least 5000 years to when Chinese used the dried roots as a laxative. The first documented uses in western civilization are 2100 years ago, when rhubarb roots were an ingredient in numerous medicinal remedies of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

There is no record of common culinary uses of rhubarb prior to the 1800s. Widespread consumption of rhubarb stalks first began in Britain in the early 19th century with its popular adoption as an ingredient in desserts.

Rhubarb leaves are toxic and shouldn't be eaten. This is due to high concentrations of oxalic acid, an organic poison and corrosive found in many plants but present in relatively large amounts in rhubarb leaves. Oxalic acid is also present in smaller amounts within rhubarb and shouldn't be eaten in large quantities by people with kidney stones.

Rhubarb is low in calories (without any added sugar!) containing only 20 calories per cup, it contains vitamins A & C, potassium and fibre. Rhubarb is most often cooked in desserts but can also be used in savoury recipes and is a good accompaniment to meats, fish & poultry. For more ideas check out rhubarb recipes.

To lower the amount of sugar required to sweeten rhubarb in desserts try cooking it with orange or apple juice or with a sweeter fruit such as kiwi or strawberries. Also try adding sugar after cooking as you will need less. You can also try cooking rhubarb with refined sugar substitutes such as maple syrup or honey (although these do have a similar calorie content to sugar).

Rhubarb & Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

- 3-4 young rhubarb stalks
- 1-2 cucumbers
- 2 tbsp coarse salt
- 1 bunch of rocket leaves
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 handful of chopped mint leaves
- salt and pepper

Method

Wash rhubarb stalks and strip away any tough outer membrane. Peel one or two cucumbers. Slice the vegetables finely and toss in a bowl with 2 tablespoons coarse salt. Let stand for 10 minutes, rinse, drain and pat dry.

In a salad bowl, place a bunch of washed and chopped rocket leaves (not wild rocket) with the cucumber and rhubarb. Dress with 2 tablespoons lemon juice and 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste and garnish with a good handful of chopped mint leaves.

Food growing jobs for April

Sow sweetcorn in deep modular seed trays under cover to plant out in early June

- Feed fruit trees and bushes

- Plant out onion sets grown in pots under glass

- Order vegetable plug plants from mail-order suppliers

- Warm soil with cloches or sheets of polythene for early sowings

- Plant out maincrop potatoes

- Plant asparagus crowns

Sow the following crops if conditions are suitable: beetroot, parsnips, turnips, onions, peas and mangetout, broad beans, lettuce and salad leaves, spinach, radish, rocket, mizuna, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts

Healthy eating spotlight- Vitamin C

Where does Vitamin C come from & how much do I need?

Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is found in a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Good sources include peppers, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, oranges and kiwi fruit, black currants contain about the most, about 4 times the amount in oranges or kiwis!

How much of the vitamin a particular food contributes to the diet depends on the vitamin content of the food, the usual portion size and how often it is eaten, for example, potatoes are not the best source but because they are eaten frequently and in large portions by many people they contribute more vitamin C to the diet than say kiwis or currants

Vitamin C is lost slowly from all fruits and vegetables after harvest so the fresher the better. Vitamin C content is reduced by heat and by contact with air. It leaches

into cooking water and so foods containing vitamin C need to be eaten raw or cooked as quickly as possible in the minimum amount of water to get the maximum effect. Freezing stops its destruction so sometimes frozen veg contain more Vitamin C than fresh.

Vitamin C foods need to be in your diet every day because it can't be stored in the body and humans (along with monkeys and guinea pigs) are one of the few species which can't make their own vitamin C

You should be able to get all the vitamin C you need from your daily diet. Adults need around 40 mg a day. Taking large amounts of vitamin C can cause stomach pain, diarrhoea and flatulence. But these symptoms should disappear once you stop taking the supplements.

What does it do?

Vitamin C has a number of important functions. For example it:

helps protect all the cells of the body and is needed for cell growth and repair. You need a lot more to heal wounds and injuries.

Sore and bleeding gums and slow wound healing will result if you are short of vitamin C. Some people notice that they bruise more easily.

It is essential for absorbing vegetable but not animal sources of iron (however the food containing iron & vitamin C must be eaten at the same time to have this effect).

Rowena Pyott - rowena.pyott@harp-project.org

