Ask Flora

July, 2021

Preserving Produce

Dear Flora, I am a pretty good gardener & grow a lot of some vegetables, but can’t use all of them during the growing season. How can I preserve them for eating during the winter?

Signed, Mason

Dear Mason,

Wow, what a question! How much time do you have for all the answers?? Depending on the vegetable or fruit or herb, there are many different ways of preserving your produce, such as canning, making fruit leather, drying, pickling, freezing, etc. At the outset I will say that your local University extension agency is one of the best sources of information. For example, go to the University of Wyoming’s Extension website at <https://www.wyoextension.org/publications> & search in the Food section for a publication on your topic.

Dear Flora, How do you store root vegetables over the winter?

Signed, Roothie

Dear Roothie,

Danvers carrots were an easy & favorite root vegetable for early gardeners in Sublette County. They stored their carrots covered in sawdust or sand in a cool dark place. Most Nantes type carrots, which are the preference of most modern gardeners because of their sweetness & early maturity, do not have a long storage life, but can be stored in a refrigerator for short periods of time. Potatoes can be stored for the winter in a cool, dark location; they must be covered to avoid “greening.” Cabbage, another favorite vegetable for old-time gardeners, can also be stored in a cool, dark location for several months; however, a great way to store cabbage is to convert it into sauerkraut that has an even longer storage time.

Dear Flora, I moved here 2 years ago & do not yet know many people. I would like to meet community members & also share my vegetables & flowers. Can I set up a stall at the Farmers’ Markets?

Signed, Marko

Dear Marko,

A booth can be used to sell products at the Farmers’ Markets in Pinedale on Thursdays from 4-7 on the Courthouse Square. Go to <http://mainstreetpinedale.com> has all the information for Pinedale. Call 307-260-6443 for the Marbleton market.

Dear Flora, I have a huge amount of Swiss chard & other greens. Do you have any novel ways to handle this problem?

Signed, Swiss Miss

Dear Swiss Miss,

Swiss chard, kale, & spinach are delicious sautéed in a bit of oil & garlic. A large quantity of greens cook down to almost nothing, so you can harvest a lot of them at one time (they are all “cut & come again”, so be prepared for another harvest. These greens can also successfully be blanched (quickly dunked in boiling water) & frozen. I like to puree greens & use as marinades or sauces. You can also dehydrate the leaves using your oven, the sun or a dehydrator & you will get a powder that can be stored for a long time & can be tossed in all sorts of dishes, even desserts! Another fun thing to do is make chips in the oven – yummy & healthy.

Dear Flora, I don’t have the space to have a garden or greenhouse, but would really like to become more food secure & independent. Do you have any recommendations?

Signed, Leif

Dear Leif,

What a great objective for you to have! One thing you could do if you have the space is to grow in containers or a raised bed. Many local gardeners successfully grow vegetables in mineral lick tubs. There is a method called “square foot gardening” that shows you how to grow compatible vegetables in small spaces & close together. You could also get a large amount of whatever is in season at a Farmer’s Market & preserve that - for example, freeze or dehydrate strawberries & raspberries; can sweet corn &

green beans (always use a pressure canner); put garlic cloves in olive oil or roast & freeze; & can tomatoes (I suggest using the hot water bath canning method).

Dear Flora, Do I have to pull all my carrots out of the ground before winter arrives?

Signed, Bugsy

Dear Bugsy, Of course to be sure you harvest some carrots, the safest thing is to dig them before the greens die (so you know where to dig). If you want to extend the harvest, you can also heavily mulch the carrots or cover with plastic & dig anytime you want to.

Our local Sage & Snow Garden Club is a fun way to get gardening information, meet local gardeners & help make our community beautiful. We usually meet on the third Tuesday of the month, but in-person meetings are currently suspended. In the meantime, you can visit the website (read previous Ask Flora articles), Facebook or Twitter pages. The 2021 schedule of events has been posted in case you want to participate.