



ACTIVITY GUIDE

ASPARAGUS

LEARN



facts

- Spanish translation: *Los espárragos* • Hmong translation: *Kaus Ntsuag/Kaus Ntoo*
- The word asparagus comes from the Greek word *Asparagos*, meaning sprout or shoot. Egyptians used asparagus spears as gifts for the gods.
- Asparagus can be found in three colors: green, white, and purple. White asparagus is grown under the soil, so it is never exposed to sunlight and never turns green.
- Asparagus is a stem vegetable and the roots can grow 20 feet deep.
- Asparagus is related to onions, leeks, and garlic.



EAT



nutrition & seasonality

• **Key nutrients:**

Folate - Helps prevent birth defects, is needed to make DNA, and helps your cells divide, including red blood cells.

Vitamin C - Helps wounds heal, is important for the immune system, and is an antioxidant, which protects cells from damage.

Vitamin K - Needed for blood clotting, preventing excessive bleeding.

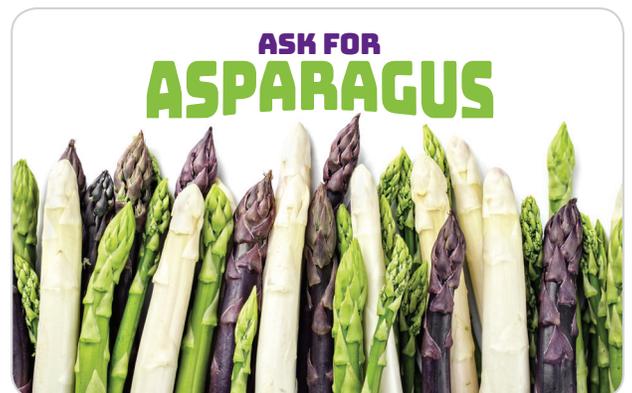
- Fresh asparagus grown in Wisconsin is available in May and June.

TASTE



taste testing

Asparagus can be enjoyed raw or cooked! Give each kid a raw spear of asparagus. If possible, allow kids to slice part of the spear crosswise and lengthwise to observe the internal structure (an adult can also pre-slice the spears). Now give each kid a spear of cooked asparagus (asparagus can be pre-cooked in a microwave). Allow kids to slice the cooked spears and note any differences. Encourage kids to use their five senses to observe, smell, feel, listen, and taste both versions of asparagus. Poll kids to find out if they prefer raw versus cooked asparagus and why.



Nutritious,
Delicious,
Wisconsin!

FUN



activity: Colorful Stems

Objective: Kids will observe how stems transport water and nutrients throughout the plant.

Supplies: Celery stalk with leaves, food coloring (blue or red), and a cup or jar of water.

Procedure: The stems of vegetables provide structural support while transporting water and nutrients throughout the plant. One way to visually show how stems transport water and nutrients throughout the plant is by using celery, another stem vegetable. Add a few drops of food coloring to a cup of water. Place the bottom part of the celery stalk into the cup of water. Leave the celery in the water overnight and return the next day to record your observations. Just like an elevator, stems pull water up into the leaves.

This activity can be done in multiple settings: classroom, outdoors, garden, or virtual.

Tips for adapting to virtual learning: This activity is simple to do in a home environment if kids have access to celery. One bunch of celery can be divided among a group of kids. If this is not feasible, share a link to a video: <https://youtu.be/Klug9Foou3s>.

Share pictures and engage with the Wisconsin Harvest of the Month community by using #WIHarvestoftheMonth on social media.



READ



books

- *Inch by Inch: The Garden Song* by David Mallett
- *The Mighty Asparagus* by Vladimir Radunsky
- *Ryan and the Asparagus* by Mathew Horejsi
- *The Vegetables We Eat* by Gail Gibbons



GARDEN CONNECTION

planting

Asparagus plants are usually grown from one-year-old crowns (an underground stem). This provides a crop more quickly than if asparagus is grown from seed. Plant asparagus early in the spring. Asparagus requires about three years from the time of planting to establish permanent roots and produce quality spears. If uncut, the edible stalks develop into fern-like plants in warmer temperatures. In the first year, it is essential for ferns to develop and for the spears to be left unharvested so the roots can develop. Asparagus will return every year for 20 to 30 years!

harvesting

Harvest asparagus in the late spring and early summer. It is best to wait until after the third year of growth to harvest your first crop. Snap or cut spears close to the ground that are pencil-thin and 5 to 8 inches long. Refrigerate asparagus for up to four days by wrapping the ends of stalks in a wet paper towel and placing them in a plastic bag.