



In this issue:

Weeding for Wellness

Stretch Smart: Protect Your Body and Minimize Soreness

Kindness at Work

Savor the Season, Stretch Your Budget

Recipe: Roasted Asparagus

Coming next week:

Step it Up: Power Your Walk with Intervals

Strong from Head to Toe: Upper Body Moves that Matter

Reel in the Benefits: Why Seafood Deserves a Spot on Your Plate

Recipe: Shrimp Boil Foil Packets

Weeding for Wellness

All types of gardening can have a positive impact on your health, whether you plant a small container garden for herbs or a large in-ground row garden. Gardening can help relieve stress, improve your social-emotional health, provide fresh produce for your family, and offer the opportunity to get low to moderate physical activity. Plus, being outside can boost Vitamin D levels, which help keep your bones, muscles, and teeth strong.

Digging, lifting, raking, and planting produce movement for your upper and lower body. Gardening increases flexibility, improves bone density, and strengthens joints. At the start of each gardening season, you may feel some soreness from using your muscles in different ways. Prepare for gardening like you do for a walk or any other physical activity. Begin by moving around and warming up your muscles. Start with light movement such as laying plants out in the garden or gathering lighter gardening equipment. Do some dynamic stretching (leg swings, arm circles, shoulder rolls, etc.). Warming up before you lift heavy bags or bend suddenly will help prevent soreness and injury.

Remember to lift properly, especially since big bags of soil and mulch may be heavier than items you regularly carry. When you lift, squat down, bending at the hips and knees, and push your buttocks out. Hold items as close to you as possible. When you turn, rotate your whole body and do not twist your back. And, whenever possible, push rather than pull.

When you finish gardening, take time to stretch while your muscles are warm. This will help prevent soreness and allow your body to cool down from activity. This resource on [Gardening Exercises and Body Mechanics](#) provides illustrations of proper lifting, turning, carrying, and stretching. Make sure you stretch your hands and wrists after gardening as they get a workout too! Gardening is great for people of all ages and helps keep older hands strong and nimble. Research shows that older adults who garden have better hand strength

and pinch force, higher self-esteem, and better overall physical health.

Now is the time to dig in to a hobby that supports your overall health and wellness!

Stretch Smart: Protect Your Body and Minimize Soreness

Flexibility tends to diminish as you get older, but you can always regain and maintain flexibility with regular stretching. Flexibility is important so that muscles function properly and have good range of motion. Stretching improves circulation, helps you maintain better posture, helps relieve stress from tight muscles, improves coordination and balance, and reduces muscle and joint stiffness.

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends stretching at least 2 to 3 times per week, working your way up to daily stretching. There are two basic types of stretches — dynamic and static.



Dynamic stretches are slow controlled movements that help warm the body and prepare muscles for moderate and vigorous activity. These should always be done as part of a warm-up for exercise. Examples of dynamic stretching include arm circles, shoulder rolls, hip rotation, and knee lifts.

The best time to do static stretching is just after exercise, when your muscles are warm. Here are tips to perform static stretching safely and comfortably:

- Hold each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds and repeat the stretch 2 to 4 times.
- Move to feel a stretch, but not pain.
- Don't bounce while you stretch.
- Breathe! Don't hold your breath while you are stretching. Relax and breathe.
- Stretch both sides to make sure your joint range of motion is as balanced as possible. Focus on stretching major muscle groups such as the hips, glutes, hamstrings, calves, shoulders, back, and chest.

Here are several helpful resources:

- Guide to Stretches: [A guide to basic stretches - Mayo Clinic](#)
- Farmer Daily Stretching Program: [Stretching-Brochure.pdf](#)

Kindness at Work

Workplaces that promote and support kindness excel. Studies show that kindness promotes stronger relationships, greater collaboration, higher engagement, and longer employee retention. Learn more about the impact of kindness at our next webinar, "Kindness at Work," on Wednesday, May 6, with Elaine Johannes, Ph.D., State Extension Specialist and Kansas Health Foundation Distinguished Professor in Community Health.

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Walk Kansas Learning Lounge

Webinar time: Wednesdays at 12:10p.m.
(room opens at 12, noon)

May 6: Kindness at Work



Link to join or scan the QR code:
ksu.zoom.us/j/92803723573

All webinars will be recorded.

Savor the Season, Stretch Your Budget

Eating seasonally is one of the simplest ways to boost your health, stretch your food budget, and enjoy food at its peak flavor.

Seasonal produce is typically harvested at its prime, meaning it has had more time to develop vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. For example, summer tomatoes and berries are rich in vitamin C, while fall squash and leafy greens provide fiber and vitamin A. Because seasonal foods don't need to travel long distances or sit in storage for extended periods, they retain more of the nutrients your body needs to stay energized and healthy.

Flavor and freshness are a huge perk for eating seasonally. There's no comparison between a tomato picked in season and one shipped across the country in the off-season. Fresh herbs like basil, cilantro, and parsley are especially aromatic when harvested at their peak, enhancing meals

without the need for added salt or fat. This [Buying Guide for Kansas-Grown Fruits and Vegetables](#) can help you find the best places to buy produce locally as well as a chart that shows when popular fruits and veggies are in season in our state.

When produce is in season, it's more abundant, which often leads to lower prices at grocery stores and farmers markets. You can also enjoy your favorite foods year-round by preserving them. Home canning is one way to preserve fresh produce, while freezing and drying are the simplest methods. You can find the most current recommendations and recipes for food preservation [on the Home Food Preservation page from K-State's Rapid Response Center](#).

Eating seasonally encourages variety, supports local agriculture, and helps you connect more closely with the food on your plate.

One easy way to prepare and enjoy fresh vegetables is to roast them. Cut veggies into uniform pieces for even cooking. Harder vegetables, like carrots or potatoes, may need slightly smaller pieces than softer ones like zucchini, peppers, or mushrooms. Toss vegetables with olive or canola oil, season however you wish (salt, pepper, herbs, spices, or a splash of balsamic vinegar or lemon juice.) Spread vegetables in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet, leaving space between pieces. Overcrowding causes steaming instead of roasting. Roast in oven at 400° to 450°F.

Roasted Asparagus

Makes 6 Servings

Ingredients:

2 bunches asparagus, pithy ends snapped off

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ teaspoon coarse kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper to taste

Seasoning (optional)

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 450°F.
3. Rinse asparagus under cold running water and dry. The bottom third of the asparagus stalk is often quite fibrous and pithy, so this needs to be removed. Bend the asparagus stalks in half and allow them to break naturally. Discard the bottoms.
4. Lay asparagus on a large rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with the oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss to combine and then spread out into a single layer.
5. Roast the asparagus until crisp-tender, about 8 to 12 minutes for thin spears and 13 to 15 minutes for thicker spears.
6. Remove asparagus from the pan and transfer to serving plates or a platter. Add any seasoning you wish. Here are some ideas:
 - **Lemon and Herbs:** 1 tablespoon chopped herbs (chives, dill, tarragon, etc.); ½ lemon zested plus a squeeze of lemon juice.
 - **Pesto:** Thin two tablespoons pesto with 1 tablespoon olive oil or water. Top with shaved Parmesan Cheese.
 - **Balsamic vinegar:** A great compliment to roasted veggies.



Nutrition Information per serving: 50 calories; 2 g total fat (0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat); 6 g carbohydrates; 10 g sugar; 3 g protein; 3 g fiber; 160 mg sodium.