

FRESH FROM THE GARDEN

ROOT VEGETABLES TURNIPS

This lesson may be presented as part of an overview of root vegetables, or as a stand-alone turnip lesson.

If presenting two or more root vegetables as one lesson, some duplicated demonstrations and food "tastings" may be eliminated.

It may be necessary to prepare some recipes in advance and reheat them during the presentation, if possible.

The material is suitable for both beginning gardeners and gardeners with established productive vegetable gardens.

Use the lesson to:

- Teach about the health benefits of turnips
- Demonstrate how to properly harvest, store, handle, preserve, and healthfully prepare turnips.
- Introduce new and/or unfamiliar vegetables to gardeners in order to encourage gardeners to include more nutrient dense cool weather vegetables in their gardens and their diets.
- Provide more healthful alternatives to traditional cooking techniques or recipes.
- Instruct gardeners how to deal with an overabundant crop.

With minor adaptation, the lesson can be used to introduce the concept of growing vegetables at home to non-gardeners. For example, a container gardening section could be added to demonstrate how to grow turnips in a pot or container.

Key presentation points:

1. Nutrition and health benefits associated with vegetables
2. Importance of consuming fruits and vegetables daily.
3. Simple cultivation recommendations
4. Harvesting techniques
5. Washing and storing
6. Healthful cooking/preparation techniques
7. Recipe demonstration (1 or 2)
8. Recipe

Additional (optional) points:

- History or origin
- Cultural information
- Interesting or fun facts

Additional (optional) Activities:

- Carve (or paint) a turnip jack-o-lantern.
- Compare vegetable name in English with another language appropriate for your audience.
- Taste and compare flavor of different root vegetables
- Sample thinly sliced raw turnips with a healthful dip
- Test audiences' knowledge regarding the difference between a fruit and a vegetable, and into which category selected produce falls
- Demonstrate how turnips may be grown in containers
- Distribute plants or seeds for immediate planting in the garden

Turnip Facts:

- Turnips are one of the oldest crops in existence.
- The longer you cook a turnip the more bitter it gets.
- About 2000 years ago, the Romans used turnips to remove wrinkles.
- The Pennsylvania Dutch make a coleslaw with turnips, as well as one with cabbage.
- Turnips were first planted in America (in Virginia) in 1609.
- Turnips were probably served at the first Thanksgiving.
- Large turnips (and rutabaga) were the first Halloween Jack-o-lanterns. Pumpkins came later.

Preparation:

- Review lesson material
- Review presentation guidelines
- Review demonstration checklist
- Review resources for additional presentation information or activities
- Select seasonal vegetables for demonstration
- Prepare vegetables for demonstrations, as necessary
- Prepare recipes or parts of recipes for demonstration and sampling, as necessary

Following is a suggested script with step-by-step demonstration activities:

PRESENTATION: TURNIPS

Introduce yourself and review what you will be presenting with the audience. Discuss the recipe(s) that you will demonstrate.

“Turnips, originally called "neeps" (derived from the Latin word for turnips--napus), are one of the oldest know vegetables and were an important crop in the Middle Ages. In addition to being appreciated for their food value, they have been used as a wrinkle remover by the Romans, and as a treatment for frostbite, gout, measles, and arthritis.

Turnips are a member of the cabbage family, and their tops, turnip greens, are classified as a green leafy

Note: If you plan to demonstrate 2 recipes, select 1 that requires cooking and 1 that is served raw. Start the recipe that requires cooking at the beginning of the presentation to allow adequate cooking time. The 2nd recipe may be prepared at or towards the end of the presentation.

It may be necessary to prepare some recipes in advance and reheat them during the presentation, if possible.

vegetable. In fact, some varieties of turnips are grown just for their tops and the roots are never allowed to develop.”

☞ Display fresh turnips with green leafy tops, if possible. If not, display a photograph.

“Turnips are fast growers and don’t require much care. Although they can grow very large (in 1850 a California grower reported he had produced one weighing over 100 pounds), turnips should be harvested when small, firm and crisp. Unlike other root vegetables, turnips should not be left in the ground once they are ready to be harvested. They will become strong-flavored, bitter, tough, and woody.”

☞ Display turnips of different sizes

☞ Point out best size to harvest turnips

“Turnips are a good source of potassium, vitamin C, and folate. The greens are rich in vitamins A and C. Turnips also contain some important plant elements called phytochemicals that may protect us against cancer.”

☞ Discuss daily vegetable recommendation (see “*Nutrition – the basics*” handout, in general 2 ½ to 3 cups per day for adults)

☞ Define phytochemicals and discuss health benefits, if time allows (see “*Nutrition – the basics*” handout for information on phytochemicals)

“Store turnips in the refrigerator vegetable crisper or in a plastic bag. Remove the green tops before storing. Turnips contain more water than other roots, so they deteriorate more quickly. They will last about 2 weeks.

Always scrub turnips with a brush and rinse with plenty of water, even if you plan to peel them.”

☞ Demonstrate washing technique

“Turnips, like cabbage, can be preserved through the process of fermentation. Fermented or pickled turnips are called "sauerkraut.”

Young, tender turnips can be served raw. Try them grated in a salad, or thinly sliced as a low calorie chip for dip.”

☞ Distribute a small sample of thinly sliced or grated raw turnip, **or**

☞ Introduce turnip and apple salad

☞ Demonstrate recipe

☞ When recipe is finished and before portioning samples, measure a 1-cup serving of raw salad and place on a small plate

- ☞ Discuss portion size
- ☞ Distribute a small sample of the salad for tasting
- ☞ Ask audience how they like the recipe

“Young tender turnips don’t need to be peeled, but peel older turnips and trim off the tops and the taproot.”

- ☞ Demonstrate how to prepare turnips for cooking

“Cook turnips the same way you would a potato. A simple and traditional method is to boil and mash them. When boiling, use just enough water to prevent the turnips from scorching.

Slow roasting concentrates their natural sugar and tones down the "cabbagy" flavor.”

- ☞ Demonstrate how to prepare turnips for roasting
- ☞ Discuss the difference between roasting and baking instructions
- ☞ Discuss roasting time and temperature
- ☞ Option: distribute a small portion of roasted turnips for tasting

“Turnips are also delicious steamed, braised, baked, microwaved, or added to soups and stews.”

COOKING TURNIPS:

Trim the tops and the root. Leave small turnips whole. Peel and slice or cube larger ones. Bake, boil, microwave, or stir-fry until tender.

Boil: Cover turnips with water and heat to boiling. Cook whole turnips for 15 to 20 minutes; 1/2” pieces take 5 to 8 minutes.

Steam: Put 1/2” pieces into a steamer basket over 1” of boiling water. Steam for about 15 minutes, or until tender.

Microwave: Cook 2 cups of cubed turnips in a dish with two tablespoons of water. Microwave on high for 4 to 6 minutes. Small turnips may be left whole.

- ☞ Introduce mashed turnip (or other) recipe
- ☞ Demonstrate recipe
- ☞ Distribute a small portion for tasting
- ☞ Ask audience how they like the recipe

“Don't "undo" all the nutritional benefits of eating turnips by cooking them with large

amounts of fat and salt. Sauces, dressings, and other ingredients will add calories, fat, and cholesterol.”

☞ Conclude presentation.

“Remember, for good health, it is important to eat a variety of vegetables, including turnips and other root vegetables. Be sure to eat the turnip tops as well, since they are even more nutritious than the root.

Eat vegetables every day--at least 2 ½ cups, but more are better. The more you eat, the better chance you have for a healthy life. Scientists have found that people who eat turnips and other vegetables, have a lower risk of developing some of the more common cancers.”

☞ Ask for questions

☞ Thank audience for their participation

Recipes

MASHED TURNIPS

4 servings

4 large turnips, peeled and cut into 2” cubes
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
About 1/4 – 1/2 can (5 oz) evaporated skim milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Steam turnips or boil until very tender in enough water to prevent them from scorching them. If water boils away before turnips are soft, add more. Alternatively, turnips may be microwaved.

Drain turnips well and mash with the margarine until smooth.

Beat in about ½ of the can of milk and add salt and pepper to taste. Add additional milk, if necessary.

Note: If turnips are bitter, stir in a small pinch of sugar.

GRATED TURNIP & APPLE SALAD

4 servings

2 turnips, peeled & grated
2 crisp green apples, seeded & grated and tossed with lemon or lime juice
Juice of 1 large lemon or 2 limes
6 scallions, sliced
2 tablespoon oil
1 clove garlic, minced & mashed

1 chile, seeded & minced

Sugar to taste—approx. 1 tablespoon
1 handful chopped cilantro

OPTIONAL: grated carrot

Combine apple with other ingredients and mix well.

Note: This salad is similar to a Thai Green Papaya Salad

GLAZED TURNIPS

4 servings

6 medium turnips, peeled and sliced
2 cups reduced sodium chicken broth
1 small onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 tablespoons margarine or butter
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Small handful minced parsley
Salt and pepper to taste

Melt the margarine in a non-stick pan. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft. Add the turnips and sugar and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the liquid evaporates and turnips are very tender (about 30 to 40 minutes). Stir in the lemon juice and parsley and season with salt and pepper to taste.

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