



**Julie Garden-Robinson**  
Food & Nutrition Specialist

## Gardens grow more than vegetables

*Summer brings many opportunities to improve your health*

I sprinkled seeds for mixed leafy greens in my garden, and I planted a row of spinach, too. With regular watering, the tiny seeds should yield many flavorful salads.

I probably planted more than enough, but I figured I will be sharing with friends and family.

As I covered the seeds with soil, I thought about research linking fruits and vegetables with long-term health.

According to an analysis of data from 100,000 participants, the “magic” number of vegetable and fruit servings for longevity was five: three servings of vegetables and two of fruit.

That’s about 3 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit. In summer sports terms, a “cup” is about the size of a softball.

When the participants ate five servings a day, they reduced their risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Be inspired to enjoy plenty of berries, such as our in-season strawberries and blueberries. Enjoy grapes and apples. Try a variety of vegetables, including green leafy vegetables, cabbage, carrots, green beans and onions, which are rich in natural plant compounds that fight disease.

Fruits and vegetables should be part of an overall healthy eating pattern that also includes lean protein foods, grains — especially whole grains — and dairy foods or other calcium-rich choices.

Staying healthy involves taking care of yourself on several levels. Besides a healthful diet and physical activity, another component may be just as important: social connections.

Here’s some bad news: being socially isolated can increase your rate of premature death, according to researchers. Too few social connections can affect your im-



Spinach is rich in natural plant compounds that fight disease. (Pixabay photo)

mune system, which fights disease; your metabolic system, which converts food to energy; and your endocrine system, which produces and releases hormones that regulate many body processes.

You might want to check in with

family and friends regularly, because being connected is not only good for you but also for them.

I may need to invite people out to help me in my garden — or chat across the fence with my neighbors.

Harvard researchers found that

relationships were more important than fame or wealth — or even genetics in some cases — in helping people live a long, healthy life.

Connect with people in various ways this summer through community gardening, walking outdoors to enjoy the flowers and trying new fruits and vegetables from local gardens.

A few years ago, my former colleague worked on some conversation starter cards for reminiscing. Get together with a friend on a walk or pull some weeds and discuss your responses to a few of these.

- What did your family do to celebrate birthdays when you were a child?
- What type of music did you like when you were in school? Did you play an instrument or sing?
- What type of technology have you found helpful in your life?
- What could you live without?
- What kind of household chores or farm chores did you do in your youth?
- What was your favorite subject in school? Did you choose a career related to that subject? Why or why not?

Whether you are growing vegetables, sharing produce with neighbors or gathering around a favorite recipe, summer is a great season to nourish both body and friendships.

### Spinach Artichoke Dip

- 2 tablespoons olive oil or your favorite oil
- 1 large garlic clove, finely chopped
- 12 ounces fresh spinach, roughly chopped (about 12 cups)
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 (14-ounce) can quartered artichoke hearts, drained and coarsely chopped
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cut into 1-inch blocks
- 4 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 4 ounces plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated

Heat oil in medium pot over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until fragrant. Add spinach into pot one handful at a time, letting it wilt before adding more. Add crushed red pepper, if preferred. Cook until most of the water has evaporated. Add artichokes and season with salt and pepper, if desired. Cook for 3 minutes. Reduce heat to low, and add cream cheese and mozzarella. Warm until melted. Stir in Greek yogurt and Parmesan cheese. Place in an oven-safe casserole and broil 3-5 minutes until golden. Serve with whole-grain crackers.

Makes 12 servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 11 grams (g) fat, 7 g protein, 7 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 320 milligrams sodium.

(Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., is a North Dakota State University Extension food and nutrition specialist and professor in the Department of Health, Nutrition and Exercise Sciences.)

# Dakota Gardener

## Olla in a bind

*An unglazed clay pot is more useful than you might think.*

By Emily How,  
Horticulture agent  
NDSU Extension – Ward County

“I may have messed up,” I confessed to my mother over the phone a few weeks ago.

In my springtime excitement, I had planted my radishes and spinach in an elevated bed. My mistake came from not checking my calendar. I was planning on being out of town for the next week and a half. Seeds were already planted, and I had no way to water them.

“Just use an olla,” my mother responded. She had just finished her Master Gardener course in Texas and was excited to tell me all she had learned.

Olla, pronounced “oy-ya,” means “pot” in Spanish. Olla is an old irrigation method that was very popular a few years ago and even spurred a previous Dakota Gardener article. The process is simple: use an unglazed clay pot, fill it with water and let the magic of capillary action do its work.

If the soil around the clay pot is dry, the water will transfer from the pot to the soil through the small pores in the clay pot. For this reason, the pot must be unglazed clay. Water cannot pass through a glazed or plastic pot.

Traditional ollas are jugs with a wide base and a narrow neck with a cover on top. You can buy a traditional olla, but I was in a rush, and these ollas needed to get into the garden bed immediately. Once again, Mom came to the rescue with her newfound Master Gardener knowledge and told me how to build one.

There are two popular ways to build an olla at home. The simplest method is to bury a clay pot, leaving one inch above the soil, then plug up the bottom hole with something like a ceramic tile so the water cannot run through. Fill with water and cover with a pot lid. Weigh down the lid with a rock or other heavy object and then just check the olla to see how often you need to refill the olla.

The second way is to get two clay pots of the same size and glue the tops together with a silicon glue (often found in the plumbing section). Use silicon glue to plug up one of the holes. Let the silicon cure, then fill with water by submerging in a bucket of water. Bury the glued pots so that the top of the unsealed pot is 1 inch above the soil line. You can use a drill to widen the top hole, but I have found that my hose on low pressure fills the olla pot just as easily.

So how many ollas does one garden need? According to the University of Arizona Extension, the olla will cover an area two times the diameter of the pot. So, one 6-inch pot will cover one square foot.

Did this work? Yes! I came back to a garden full of radish and spinach sprouts looking happy and healthy. Ollas are a great way to keep my elevated bed watered



Ollas are a great way to keep elevated beds watered through the summer. (NDSU photo)

through the summer, since it tends to dry out more quickly than my in-ground garden. This method can also be used in flower pots or other areas that may be difficult to keep watered.

One word of advice: do not use this method with woody perennials or trees, as their roots can break the pot and leave a mess in your soil.

## STEP INTO CONFIDENCE!

### Join the Stepping On Fall Prevention Program

#### WHERE:

Rolette County Public Health  
114 3rd St NE, Rolla, ND

#### WHEN:

Monday  
June 8, 15, 22, 29  
July 6, 13, 20  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

#### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- Simple strength and balance exercises
- Home safety tips to reduce fall hazards
- How vision, footwear, and medication can affect balance
- Confidence-building strategies for everyday life

#### WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Adults 60 years and older who live independently and want to stay that way!



FREE – NO CHARGE



Rolette County Public Health District  
To Register Call 701-477-5646

### BID REQUEST

Open Date: May 11, 2026

The Belcourt School District is calling for sealed bids for:

- The purchase of two (2) new 71-passenger school buses with gasoline engine and automatic transmission.

Pricing for each bus must be listed. Successful bidders must be a licensed, bonded, franchised dealer with warranty and parts availability. Any offers by the bidders of warranties, options, or assumed costs must be listed in the bids. For exact bid specification questions or information on used buses, contact Mr. Ray Trotter Jr. at (701)477-6471 ext. 3307.

All interested businesses or parties submitting bids must comply with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) Requirements. All parties must have or acquire a tribal business license before the final purchase is made. For further information on TERO or EPA fees, call (701)477-2600.

Sealed bids must be submitted to Duane Poitra at the school Business Office by the closing date of June 3, 2026 at 1:00 pm. The mailing address is Belcourt School District #7, Attn: Duane Poitra, PO Box 440, Belcourt, ND 58316. The bid will be opened at the school Business Office and will be presented to the School Board at its next regular meeting. The Belcourt School District #7 Board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or any part of the bid or to waive any formalities in the bidding. For further information contact:

Duane Poitra  
Business Manager  
P.O. Box 440  
Belcourt, ND 58316  
701-477-6471 ext. 3213

