



# National Gardening Month

## April 2025

Non-Metro New Mexico Area Agency on Aging

Nutrition Corner

This month we celebrate the fun of gardening and the many benefits it provides. Research has shown that spending time in nature can lower stress levels and boost your mood. Gardening provides a low-impact form of exercise, helping to build strength and endurance. Home-grown fruits and vegetables tend to be more flavorful and more nutrient dense than store bought produce. Gardening can help reduce food waste and lower grocery bills.

[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

### Commonly Grown Vegetables

The New Mexico climate can be challenging for growing vegetables due to low rain fall, abundant sunshine, and temperature fluctuations. The most commonly grown vegetables are:

**tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans, zucchini, chiles, potatoes, onions, garlic, leafy greens**



### Fruits and Nuts in New Mexico

Fruit and nut trees have beautiful flowers, leaves and fruit while providing much needed cool shade. The most commonly grown fruit trees are:

**apricot, plum, peach, cherry, apple, pears, fig**

Grape vines are also commonly grown, however, berries tend to be more difficult to grow in our NM climate.

Our state tree, the Piñon tree, provides one the most popular nuts, the piñon nut. Other commonly grown nut trees are:

**pecan, pistachio, almond**

[pubs.nmsu.edu](http://pubs.nmsu.edu)

Visit our website at: [nonmetroaaa.com](http://nonmetroaaa.com)

### Benefits of Fiber

Research supports that fiber in our daily diet not only benefits our digestive system but may reduce the risk of some chronic diseases. Fiber is mainly found in plant foods such as:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole Grains
- Legumes (beans)
- Nuts and Seeds



Fiber can support good health in a number of ways. Foods with fiber:

1. feed the “good” bacteria in the intestines creating a more comfortable and regular digestive system
2. may help lower cholesterol
3. is more filling and tend to have less calories, supporting healthy weight control
4. slow the absorption of sugar and helps improve blood sugar levels
5. lowers the risk of heart disease

The recommended daily intake of fiber is:

- ◆ 21 grams for women older than age 50
- ◆ 30 grams for men older than age 50

However, most adults do not meet these requirements. Add more plant foods to your diet to get the health benefits that fiber provides. But be careful! Too much fiber can lead to gas, bloating, and stomach cramps.

[mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com)

# Rhubarb Blueberry Crisp

(Adapted from FoodHero.com)

Makes: 5 cups

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 45 min

## Ingredients: Topping

1/4 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup flour

1/2 cup old fashioned rolled oats

1/4 cup margarine or butter, melted

## Fruit Filling

3 cups chopped rhubarb (fresh or frozen)

3 cups blueberries (fresh or frozen)

2 TBSP cornstarch

1/2 cup sugar

1 cup 100% fruit juice  
(any type)

1 tsp vanilla



Allrecipes

## Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together brown sugar, flour, and oats. Mix in margarine (butter) and set aside.
3. Spread fruit in the bottom of 8 x 8 baking dish and set aside.
4. In medium sauce pan, mix cornstarch and sugar and stir in juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring all the time, until mixture is thickened. Turn off heat.
5. Stir in vanilla. Pour mixture over fruit.
6. Crumble oat mixture on top of fruit.
7. Bake for 45 minutes or until topping is browned and fruit is bubbling at edges. Serve warm or cold. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

NOTE: Use other berries instead of blueberries.



Bitheff Farms

## Rhubarb Facts

- ◆ a tart-tasting vegetable that is enjoyed as a fruit
- ◆ a good source of antioxidants with anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, and anti-cancer properties
- ◆ rhubarb leaves are poisonous and should not be eaten
- ◆ is often called the "pie plant"
- ◆ a good source of nutrients: Vitamins A, C, K, folate, riboflavin, niacin, manganese, potassium, and phosphorus, iron, and fiber
- ◆ You can hear rhubarb grow! It squeaks and pops!

## TIPS FOR FREEZING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

1. Rinse produce.
2. Trim, peel, and cut produce as desired. Aim for pieces of the same size.
3. Use air-tight and freezer-safe containers.
4. Spread produce pieces on flat pan and freeze before placing in the container.
5. Remove as much air as possible from container before putting in the freezer.

### FRUIT:

To keep fruit from browning, cover with water after peeling or cutting. Add 1TBSP lemon juice per 1 cup of water. Drain water before packaging.

### VEGETABLES:

Celery, onions, and peppers can be packaged right after preparing.

Beets, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and winter squash should be cooked before freezing.

Other veggies can be blanched (placed in boiling water for a few minutes, then placed in ice water).

FoodHero.com