A Note to Families

Hello from home! We hope you are all staying healthy and making lasting memories as we continue social distancing and learning at home. We miss visiting with the students and are sad we had to put plans of planting our school gardens together on hold. We wanted to continue as much Farm to School education and efforts at home as we could, so we have been regularly posting ideas and activities to our F2S Facebook page, @CCEsenecaF2S. We have also been searching for and putting together other resources for hands on learning through gardening and environmental awareness, as well as tips for eating healthy and staying active. An extensive list of tools for kids, parents, and teachers, as well as resources for food access, can be found in our “COVID-19 Staying-at-home Toolkit” on our website www.senecacountyce.org. More ideas for at-home learning can be found on our 4H Facebook page, @senecacounty4hny or on the new FLX 4H Learning Launchpad page @FLX4HLearningLaunchpad. You can also find other great gardening activities at www.kidsgardening.org and an assortment of kid-friendly, healthy recipes for the whole family at www.fingerlakeseatsmartnewyork.org. We hope to see your kiddos soon!

Proposed Garden Project and Free Seed Starting Kit

Before school closures, this spring we were set to kick off our Seed to Salad Garden project by working with students to start the seeds that would transform their growing spaces into salad gardens. To not lose out on this opportunity, we would like to bring this project home to you. We are working on putting together free planting kits for all of our Seneca County school district families. The kits will include lettuce, cherry tomato, and cucumber seeds to grow your own salad garden at home, as well as planting mix and tips on how to get started and have a successful harvest. We are in discussion with school districts to make these available to families either through school meal program deliveries or safe learning material pick-up days. We want to reach as many families as possible so please only take ONE PER FAMILY. We want to give everyone the opportunity to grow with us, but we also understand that this may not be for everyone so please only take a kit if you plan to use it. We hope you all will join us for this fun project and continue F2S now that we are schooling at home. Thank you!

WAIT! WAIT! Don’t throw out those school milk cartons and juice cups. Save them and reuse them for seed starting containers. You can also re-purpose materials from your recycling bin, like egg cartons, milk jugs, plastic fruit containers, toilet paper and paper towel rolls, and old newspaper. Look on our F2S page for videos on making DIY seed starting pots and starting seeds indoors, as well as healthy recipes. You can watch the video on making starter pots here: DIY Seed Starter Pots video.
NY Thursday Harvest of the Month

Each month we feature a new local fruit or vegetable for a NY Thursday Harvest of the Month menu item. Most often we try to choose an item that is seasonally available. At home we have been continuing our NY Thursdays and providing recipes using our scheduled monthly produce item.

On March 26th we were set to highlight local carrots on our school menus. We put together a Carrot, Apple, Ginger Salad and posted the recipe to our F2S page.

For April we created a Tomato Cucumber Salad. This quick and easy recipe can be made as a healthy snack or side dish. Kids can follow along with a video on our F2S page.

In May we will be tossing together a fresh and delicious Spring Greens Salad. With local spring greens almost ready to harvest and peas and strawberries right around the corner, this is the perfect salad of the season. Use the recipe below or look for our video post on May 21st.

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Easy, Kid-friendly Snacks

While staying at home, we know that constant snacking or reaching for the goodie cupboard can be an issue. Some ideas for quick and healthy snacks include; apple slices with peanut butter or cheese, carrot sticks and dip, or even just a baby cucumber and a handful of cherry tomatoes. A great tip for easy snacking for kids is try to have a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter or a container of pre-cut fruit or veggies in the fridge, preferably at eye level. Another healthy and delicious option is to have a stock of frozen fruit and greens in the freezer for the kids to whip up healthy and refreshing smoothies.

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Recipes

F2S Spring Greens Salad

(serving size: 4)

**Ingredients:**
- 4 cups leaf lettuce (or head lettuce, chopped)
- 2 cups spinach, kale, mustard greens, or arugula (or a mix), chopped
- 1 cup sugar snap peas, de-stemmed and quartered (shell and all)
- 1 cup strawberries, sliced
- Vinaigrette dressing (oil, vinegar or lemon juice, salt, pepper, herbs)
- Optional: crumbled cheese

**Instructions:**
1. Rinse salad greens and pat dry. Chop greens to desired size.
2. Rinse peas and de-stem by snapping off the tops. Cut into quarters.
3. Rinse strawberries, remove stems, and slice.
4. Pour in a vinaigrette dressing and toss. You can make a simple one at home using the ingredients above.
5. Optional: You can top with a local crumbled cheese.
F2S Easy Summer Garden Salad
(serving size: 4)

Ingredients:
- 6 cups lettuce, chopped
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved.
- 1 cup cucumbers, sliced
- Vinaigrette dressing (oil, vinegar or lemon juice, salt, pepper, herbs)
- Optional: add other greens or veggies like carrots, peas, onions, etc.

Instructions:
1. Rinse salad greens and pat dry. Chop greens to desired size.
2. Rinse cherry tomatoes and cut in half.
3. Rinse cucumber and slice into bite size pieces.
4. Top with a vinaigrette dressing and toss. You can make a simple one at home using the ingredients above.

What's in season?

Produce Picks
In anticipation of new garden harvests, we are quickly approaching the turnips, radishes, spinach, lettuces, asparagus and rhubarb while we wait for those first fresh strawberries and sweet peas. Now is the perfect time to plan a garden of your own and start some seeds.

Coming Up
With the current issues we are facing, we are all unsure of what is to come and when we will be able to see each other again. Until then, we will continue to provide gardening activities, ideas to connect with nature and protect the environment, nutrition information, and new recipes using our harvest of the month items and other healthy produce. Hopefully our recipes will give you some inspiration to try new things. So take this time to plan your gardens, start your seeds, watch them grow, and enjoy your harvests. Remember, it is a labor of love, love for yourself, your families, your community, and your planet. Spend quality time and enjoy your family. Before you know it, we will miss this slower pace and time together at home. Best of health to everyone. Happy Garden Month, Earth Month, and Arbor Day!
For more updates and recipes, look for our next F2S newsletter and we will keep you up to date and informed on all things happening with Seneca County Farm to School.

About Farm to School
The New York State Farm to School Program was created by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to, “connect schools with local farms and food producers to strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness”. All four school districts in Seneca County - Waterloo, Seneca Falls, Romulus, and South Seneca- were awarded a New York State Ag & Markets grant to develop farm to school programming with coordination from Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension. The goals of the grant are to increase consumption of local produce by the students for positive health outcomes, increase the variety of local products being offered on school menus, increase the number of local farmers selling to schools, and increase awareness of the local food system in the Finger Lakes area.

For more Farm to School information
Contact Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension. The office is located at 308 Main Street Shop Centre in Waterloo. Phone: 315-539-9251. You can contact the Farm to School Educator, Candace Riegel at cmr334@cornell.edu or the Farm to School Coordinator, Mo Tidball at mmt65@cornell.edu. You can also find us on Facebook at NYS Farm to School Program - CCE Seneca or @CCEsenecaF2S.