

Hoquiam Farmers Market News - Rhubarb and Strawberry Rhubarb pies Edition

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

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Flowers fresh from the garden. Lettuce that you grew yourself. Sure, you can buy flowers or lettuce from the grocery store even in the dead of winter. But once you have harvested them from your own garden, you will never, ever prefer to buy veggies or flowers again! My dear Aunt Arlene was a fantastic gardener. Every square inch of her yard gradually became cultivated with flowers. Dahlia's were a particular speciality of hers, and I can still recall the breathtaking beauty that the sheer abundance of color created! One of her favorite conversations involved discussing the comparative merits of chicken manure versus steer manure. She was convinced that steer manure was better, but was always ready to listen to a well reasoned argument in favor of the chicken manure.

According to those who track this sort of thing, there were 29% more home gardeners in 2009 than in the previous year. That's a huge increase! Perhaps we are turning away from the excess of consumer spending and finally discovering the joys that come with harvesting your first handful of carrots, or of having such an abundance of lettuce that you can offer your friends leafy greens and a bouquet of flowers in addition to your love!

The Hoquiam Farmers Market has a table laden with seed catalogues, a spin rack full of seeds, and many experienced gardeners who are willing, yes, anxious even, to share their wise words of wisdom. Pitfalls can be avoided if you just ask Judy if she recommends trying your hand at basil. She might suggest that you start with beans. Build your confidence before trying the prima donnas of the vegetable world.

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Start with something really easy, like Rhubarb.

Rhubarb is a luscious, tart, and tasty treat that loves Grays Harbor weather! In fact, most of the Rhubarb sold in stores is grown in the Pacific Northwest. If you bought one of Judy's plants earlier this Spring, by now you'll see the stalks and leaves stretching their way outward. Next year you can look forward to a respectable harvest of Rhubarb.

Nancy is baking Rhubarb and Strawberry Rhubarb pies this week! Rhubarb has been called 'Pie Plant' for centuries, and for good reason.

Fresh Rhubarb stalks have the loveliest aroma when you cut into them, and as they cook, the flavor expands and deepens. The sweet-tart taste can't be compared to any other fruit that I know

of, and for me, Rhubarb is an instant flashback to childhood. My Grandma Bennett used to make a Rhubarb, Strawberry, and Pineapple jam that was over-the-top delicious.

Now that my own Rhubarb is ready to harvest, I'm planning on making her recipe
three cups diced Rhubarb

two cups fresh or canned pineapple chunks, unsweetened. Do not drain.

one pint strawberries

four cups sugar

one package of pectin

Combine fruits in large pot. Gently stir in sugar. Let stand about 15 minutes (no heat!) To let the juices begin to flow. Bring jam to a boil, stirring occasionally for 10 minutes before adding the pectin. Then cook for 1 more minute. Ladle into hot, clean jars and process in hot water canning bath for 10 minutes.

This is scrumptious when served over vanilla ice cream. I speak from experience. Grandma always made that from scratch too! We can delve into that process later, when summer and hand-churned ice cream season has arrived.

Come on in for a look at our seed catalogues, get our gardening advice (oh , we even have a great little book on 50 effective methods of slug control!), starter plants, and the best darned Rhubarb pie since my Grandma was in her prime!

Barbara Bennett Parsons, not a master gardener, but an enthusiastic one!

Grays Harbor Public Market, at 1958 Riverside in Hoquiam

open Wed & Thu. 9-5, Fri. & Sat. 9-6, and Sunday 10-4