

# Cereal isn't the only place you'll can find fiber

IBER IN THE GARDEN

Television commercials for cereal and margarine have guaranteed that even those who may not be interested in nutrition know that a diet high in fiber and low in cholesterol will help protect us from heart disease and cancer.

However, if you only listen to the cereal companies pushing their high fiber products, you may think that fiber is synonymous with bran while any grandmother who has pushed roughage, on her family will know that lettuce and other greens and vegetables are also rich in fiber.

There are five types of fiber. Cellulose and hemicellulose, as found in bran, may be the most commonly known, but there are also lignin, pectin and gum.

One characteristic of fiber is that it has a laxative effect. It moves waste products through our system more quickly and this may be one reason people who eat a high fiber diet tend to have less incidence of colon cancer; carcinogens spend less time in the intestine and have less opportunity to be reabsorbed into the system.

Cellulose is found in whole wheat flour which includes wheat germ and bran. However, if you go beyond the cereal and bread aisles in the supermarket you'll find that apples, pears, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, green beans, wax beans, broccoli, radishes and peppers are also good sources. In fact, bran absorbs five times its weight in water while carrots which contain pectin as well as cellulose, absorb 20 to 30 times their weight in water.

Hemicellulose which also protects against colon cancer and diverticulitis is found in eggplant, radishes, mustard greens and beets.

Lignin helps lower cholesterol and is found in strawberries, pears and green beans.

Pectin, long known to jam and jelly makers, is an important type of fiber because it not only lowers cholesterol, it helps to modulate blood glucose fluctuations. Many diabetics are put on a high fiber diet in order to reduce their need for insulin. Pectin is found in apples, blackberries, strawberries bananas, citrus fruits, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, green beans, dried peas.

Gums are found in oatmeal and cooked or baked sesame seeds. Oatmeal helps to lower cholesterol, and since my doctor told me to lower my cholesterol level, I have been trying to find someone to corroborate my claim that my oatmeal cookie recipe (made with soft margarine, walnuts and raisins) is the answer to my

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Between The Rows



problem. I haven't been successful. Jane Brody, author of the newly revised Jane Brody's Nutrition Book, is my nutrition guru. She recommends oatmeal for breakfast and replacing a spoonful of every cup of flour used in baking with oat flour or oat bran.

I have reduced the amount of fat in my diet, so now I'm looking for what I can add in order to lower my cholesterol level. A raw carrot or two a day, easily added to my dinner salad will help. A bowl of vegetable and lentil soup will, too. My favorite prescription is a big bowl of strawberries. Not difficult to take at all.

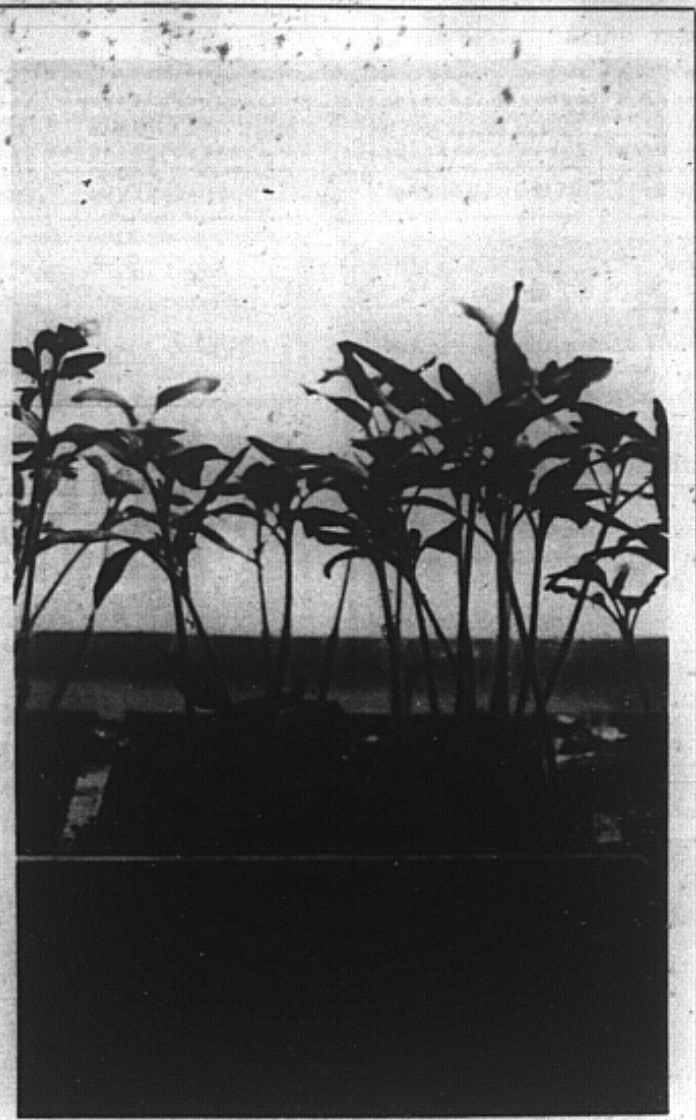
The laxative industry in our country is a multi-million dollar industry. Personally, I'd prefer investing in carrots, broccoli, apples, pears and grapes.

It's true that we don't know all we need to know about how cancer and heart disease are caused. Neither do we know all the things we can do to protect ourselves, but it does appear that a low fat, high fiber diet cannot hurt us, and that such a diet can reduce our risk of disease. Fruits and vegetables are not only sources of fiber, they are an important source of vitamins, and they have no cholesterol. Citrus fruits, tomatoes, green peppers, potatoes, dark green vegetables, strawberries, and melons are high in vitamin C which seems to block the formation of cancer-causing bacteria. Who would have thought strawberries could be so good for you?

Vitamin A, found in carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squash and dark green leafy vegetables like spinach seem to help protect against cancer, especially of the lung, breast, colon and bladder.

Members of the cabbage family, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower and kale also appear to have cancer-blocking agents.

March is National Nutrition Month, and while I plan my garden, I'm reminded of all the different ways that the garden helps me to be healthier. I get to play in the sun and then get to eat all those delectable and nutritious fruits and vegetables.



## Time to sprout

Young tomato plants await a plot in the garden as spring quickly approaches.

## March: Time for more don'ts than do's

### UMass Cooperative Extension

March is a month of many moods. It's a gradual transition between winter and spring. Most of us can't wait to get out and garden, but it is a time of more don'ts than do's. Weather is a determining factor, and it alone determines how much we can do.

If the lawn is wet and soggy, keep off. When it becomes dry enough to stand traffic, you can get out and rake up winter's debris. Use a light touch to avoid pulling out any grass plants. Avoid use of garden equipment that might leave ruts or cause compaction.

Do get out and see how your perennials have come through the winter. If any have heaved out of the soil, you can often carefully press them back into the soil. This prevents the roots from drying out. Any mulch should be left in place until the weather moderates. This is often difficult to determine but usually occurs in April.

Don't prune any spring flowering shrubs until they have completed their blooming period. The flower buds are there, and if you prune now, you'll cut them off. Don't be alarmed if some of your plants look dead. Once good growing conditions become ideal, they'll spring to life.

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