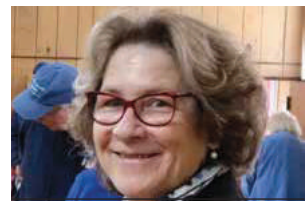


Kohlrabi a weird, but healthy, veggie



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Master Gardener

Question: My doctor has informed me that I need to add more vegetables to my diet. I went to the Farmer's Market Saturday morning and found the most odd-looking green vegetable called Kohlrabi. Can you tell me about it?

AnsWER: What a wonderful discovery! This unusual-looking vegetable has a turnip-like bulbous appearance, with two layers of stiff leaves attached in a rosette, like a cabbage. In fact, it is part of the extensive cabbage family which includes broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussels sprouts and collard greens.

Kohlrabi (*Brassica oleracea* var. *gongyolodes*) tastes a bit like broccoli stems but milder and slightly sweeter. Kohlrabi offers the same health benefits, is easier to grow and faster to mature than its relatives, making it ideal for fall or early spring planting.

Kohlrabi comes from the German word "kohl" meaning cabbage and "rabi" meaning turnip and is believed to have originated in northern Europe in the 1500s, but did not become known in the United States until around 1800.

It has long, leafy greens that shoot out from the top. Sometimes misclassified as a root vegetable, it is a low, stout cultivar of wild cabbage and sometimes called a German turnip. The modern kohlrabi is actually an enlarged



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Purple kohlrabi, much like white kohlrabi, is very similar to broccoli but is much milder and slightly sweeter.

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stem that develops into a bulb just above the soil.

Kohlrabi is a cool-season biennial that can be planted in spring and fall but prefers maturity before hot weather sets in. Crucial to producing a sweet, tender crop is a steady supply of water that promotes rapid growth. For a fall crop, sow seed directly into the garden from mid-July to early August. These tough seedlings like

thinning to achieve proper spacing and seem to sweeten up as the night temperatures drop.

A favorite kohlrabi variety is 'Rapid', which matures in 60 days, producing a bright reddish-purple globe that is mild-flavored with a very crunchy texture. The 'Early Purple Vienna' matures in 55 days, is slightly larger and flatter and somewhat more resistant to cabbageworms. The

variety most commonly offered in seed catalogs is the 'Early White Vienna' which matures in 50 days and has very uniform plants with greenish white skin and white flesh. Another popular variety is the 'Kolibri Kohlrabi' which matures in 58 days and is a heat-tolerant European hybrid with deep purple skin and crisp clear white flesh, offering a delicate, sweet flavor.

When visiting the Farmer's Market in the fall, you might find green, white or purple kohlrabis available. The round bulbs can be steamed, stuffed, or stir-fried; they can be served

raw as a part of a vegetable platter, sliced into a salad, added to soups or grated into a slaw. The greens make tasty, nutritious additions to salads and stir-fries.

It is a good source of thiamin, folate, magnesium and phosphorus, as well as dietary fiber, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, potassium, copper and manganese. Smaller kohlrabi tends to taste sweeter; the vegetable develops a sharper, more radish-like flavor as it matures. Look for fresh leaves, which indicate recent harvest and a firm bulb.

Growing, cooking

and eating vegetables is a wonderful part of a healthy lifestyle in the Pacific Northwest.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners via email at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, by phone at 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. This month, the Plant Clinic will be open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 1-4 p.m. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.