

## Healthy living

# Garden of youth

Bring these edible miracle workers into your life—and your kitchen

BY CHERYL STERNMAN RULE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS J. STORY

**POWERFUL WEAPONS** in the war against aging and disease, the compounds called antioxidants offer themselves to us in a delicious, natural way—through fruits and vegetables. When you eat them, they neutralize free-radical molecules that otherwise would oxidize and damage your DNA and cells. If you grow your own, you'll reap the biggest nutritional benefit possible, since plants tend to start losing nutrients the moment they're picked. Not all high-antioxidant foods are easy to grow, but we've chosen five top scorers from the USDA's database that you can count on to thrive in your garden—and help you thrive.

Raw spiced applesauce (see recipe on page 107)



## THE 5 TOP EASY-TO-GROW ANTIOXIDANTS



### Apples

#### WHAT THEY OFFER

A large variety of antioxidants, including flavonoids, a group of water-soluble pigments (the skin of the Red Delicious has a high concentration).

**HOW TO GROW** In full sun and well-drained soil. Water regularly, especially during fruiting. Feed with low-nitrogen fertilizer when the growing starts.



### Artichokes

#### WHAT THEY OFFER

Lots of phenolic compounds, a powerful class of antioxidants—especially the artichoke hearts.

**HOW TO GROW** These perennials prefer mild winters and summers. Space plants 4 to 6 ft. apart and mulch well. Water when soil beneath mulch dries, and harvest when buds are small by cutting 2 to 3 inches below buds.



### Blueberries

#### WHAT THEY OFFER

Anthocyanin, an antioxidant responsible for the berries' color, which appears to improve memory.

**HOW TO GROW** In sun and acidic, well-drained soil. Space bushes 4 to 6 ft. apart and mulch. Give 1 in. water per week in the first three growing seasons; fertilize lightly the second and third years.



### Garlic

#### WHAT IT OFFERS

Selenium, an essential trace mineral thought to be anticarcinogenic, and the antioxidant vitamins C and E.

**HOW TO GROW** Plant in fall for an early summer harvest. Set cloves in soil with the pointed ends up and tops 1 in. deep; space 4 to 8 in. apart. Keep soil moist and weed regularly. Harvest when leaves are mostly brown.



### Thyme

#### WHAT IT OFFERS

A collection of flavonoids, plus manganese, believed to help shore up brain function and boost heart health.

**HOW TO GROW** Set small plants 8 to 12 in. apart. Water regularly until established, then only to keep plants from drying out. Prune tips to harvest; cut flowers back to encourage new shoots.

Hi rez tk



## Healthy living

plus black pepper, also high in antioxidants: a lot of benefits in one easy dish.

**1½ lemons (preferably Meyer), divided**  
**2 large globe artichokes (each about 14 oz.)**  
**2 garlic cloves, minced**  
**½ cup mayonnaise**  
**2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves, chopped**  
**⅛ tsp. kosher salt**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

1. Remove 10 to 12 thin curls of zest from whole lemon with a 5-holed zester; cut lemon in half. (Or, use a potato peeler to remove 2 wide strips, then slice them into very thin strips.) Fill a large pot halfway with water and squeeze juice from lemon into pot; toss in squeezed halves.
2. Trim ¾ in. off each artichoke stem and discard. Remove tough outer layer of remaining stem with a vegetable peeler. Cut 1 in. off tip of each artichoke and pull off cracked or especially thick leaves; discard. Snip spiky tips off remaining leaves.
3. Slice 1 artichoke in half lengthwise through the stem. Use your thumb and a serrated grapefruit spoon to grasp any red-tinged center leaves; pull to remove. Scrape out and discard choke. Slice in half again and place both quarters in pot with lemon-water. Repeat with remaining artichoke half and second artichoke.
4. Cover pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove lid and continue boiling until stems are tender and leaves pull off with little resistance, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain on paper towels and let cool.
5. Meanwhile, combine garlic, mayonnaise, thyme, and juice of remaining lemon half in food processor. Process 30 seconds, or until smooth. Season with salt and a pinch of black pepper. Garnish with reserved lemon zest. Serve artichoke quarters with dipping sauce.

**PER SERVING** 157 CAL., 58% (91 CAL.) FROM FAT; 2.5 G PROTEIN; 10 G FAT (1.5 G SAT.); 17 G CARBO (6.5 G FIBER); 317 MG SODIUM; 7.6 MG CHOL.

### Raw spiced applesauce

**SERVES 4** **TIME** 15 minutes

Keeping the skin on the apples retains their natural flavonoids; pecans and cinnamon are also antioxidant-rich.

**4 Red Delicious apples (about 1¼ lbs.), left unpeeled, cored, and cut into small chunks**

**½ tsp. orange zest**  
**2 tbsp. fresh orange juice**  
**¼ tsp. ground cardamom**  
**⅛ tsp. cinnamon**  
**Pinch kosher salt**  
**¼ cup plain low-fat Greek yogurt**  
**¼ cup chopped toasted pecans**

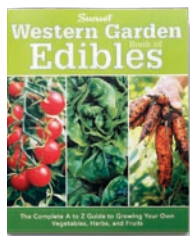
1. Combine apples, zest, juice, cardamom, cinnamon, and salt in a food processor and whirl until smoothly puréed, 3 to 5 minutes, scraping down sides of bowl if necessary. (Bits of peel will be visible.)
2. Divide among 4 bowls. Top each serving with a dollop of yogurt and some pecans.

**PER ½-CUP SERVING** 129 CAL., 38% (49 CAL.) FROM FAT; 2.2 G PROTEIN; 5.4 G FAT (0.7 G SAT.); 21 G CARBO (3.9 G FIBER); 35 MG SODIUM; 0.9 MG CHOL.

### Artichokes with garlic-thyme mayonnaise

**SERVES 4** **TIME** 40 minutes

Three easy-to-grow antioxidant foods,



### Fresh for the West

Our *Sunset Western Garden Book of Edibles*, new this month, is the ultimate guide to growing vegetables, herbs, fruits, nuts, and tropicals. Beginning and expert gardeners alike will find plenty of useful advice in its A to Z encyclopedia of more than 100 edibles, including the best varieties to grow in your region, and details on where and how to plant, tend, and harvest them. We even give you kitchen-garden design tips. *Sunset Publishing*; 304 pages; \$25.