

In October, just ahead of our prime planting season, the SCHS welcomed Florence Nishida, M.S., a Research Associate at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, who presented a remarkable program on growing Asian vegetables in Los Angeles. She not only showed us slides of which Asian vegetables home gardeners can successfully cultivate, but also provided tips on extending the growing season for these edibles. She also shared food prep ideas and simple recipes.

Since joining the Master Gardeners of Los Angeles County in 2008, Nishida has been helping L.A. residents, most notably in under-resourced communities, to



Photo courtesy of speaker.

become more self-sufficient by growing food at home. She also started the first edible/teaching garden at the Natural History Museum where she has taught Beginning Vegetable Gardening classes, and in 2010 founded the non-profit L.A. Green Grounds (www.lagreengrounds.org) to further her teaching goals. With this group, she has created many front-yard, edible gardens to demonstrate that people can improve their diets, health and physical stamina through the home growing of food. Her teaching skills were evident in her presentation, which was packed with information and was very well-organized and easy to follow.

Nishida began her program with her list of reasons why Asian vegetables should warrant a spot in L.A.'s home gardens, including that they are easy to grow in our climate and typically have long fruiting/harvesting seasons. She also mentioned that some are perennials which can find a permanent place in the landscape, and many are suited for small space gardens or container planting. These vegetables are also nutritious and quick-cooking with abundant recipes available for their use.

She then presented information about the vegetables, organized in categories, beginning with legumes (peas and beans). This group "fixes" nitrogen in the soil, which helps them – and their neighboring

plants – to grow without needing a lot of supplemental fertilizers. Nishida encouraged us to try eating the shoots of snow and snap peas, as well as the pods; planting the legume seeds next to other vegetables that would be finishing their season when the legume shoots would be coming up; and experimenting with yard-long beans (available at farmer's markets).

From there, Nishida went on to brassicas – the cabbage family – which features many Asian food staples including bok choy, tatsoi, 'Green Glaze' heirloom collard, mizuna (which has a long harvest and is drought-tolerant), Osaka purple mustard, amaranth (Chinese spinach), Malabar spinach, and the well-known Japanese cucumber. She also provided planting tips and images of easy-to-prepare dishes for many of these plants.

Members of the gourd family were shown next (Kabocha pumpkins and melons); then Solanum (Shishito pepper and Japanese eggplant – a perennial), followed by roots and tubers (Daikon radish, Japanese turnip 'Mikado', Japanese sweet potato ('Murasaki' and 'Satsuma' varieties) and Japanese taro, or Sato-imo – another perennial, and finally herbs (lemon grass, Thai basil – a perennial bee-magnet, Shungiku (edible chrysanthemum) and Shiso from the mint family).

For all of her plant categories, Nishida also provided advice on the proper spacing for planting various vegetables, how to build appropriate supports, when and how to harvest the different edible parts of specific veggies, gave suggestions for irrigation and reminded us about the importance of continuously harvesting the edible portions of these plants to prolong their production season. She wrapped up the slide portion by sharing some Asian seasonings that would enhance the flavors of these edibles, including sweet rice wine, soy sauce, sesame oil, oyster sauce, chile oil, Chinese and Japanese all-spice combinations and fresh ginger. All of the vegetables and seasonings should be readily available for purchase in the greater Los Angeles area.

The webinar concluded with our monthly give-away and a Q&A session with Nishida, providing those who stayed on with even more information on

fertilizing, pest control, the L.A. Green Grounds program, and even offering seeds she has collected to our audience! As we all get ready to refresh our gardens this fall, we now have a whole new palette of edible plants with unusual shapes, textures, scents and colors to choose from for planting. As many of us are spending more time at home these days, we might choose to expand upon what vegetables we grow at home, and become better "farmers" and cooks as we experiment in our gardens and kitchens!

🌿 Sabine Steinmetz

To watch this presentation on SCHS's YouTube channel, click on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tco9QCGqCM>

SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

Enjoy your gardens this month – whether or not you do any planting!

- Do an overall clean-up
- Leave some of your leaf mold to decompose & feed plants
- Finish pruning perennials
- Refresh your mulch as needed
- **BEGIN YOUR PLANTING!**
 - cool season vegetables
 - California natives
 - new perennial shrubs
 - seasonal favorites/annuals
- Put in bulbs for the spring and divide older ones

HAVE A SAFE and HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

🌿 Sabine Steinmetz

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