

Ethel A. Jacobsen First-Graders Harvest Garlic Scapes From Schoolyard Garden

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It's spring harvest time at the Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School garden in Surf City. Last week Joanne Kinsey, Family and Community Health Sciences educator at the Cooperative Extension of Ocean and Atlantic Counties, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, joined the school's first-graders and teachers Sarah Esarey and Kelly Turner to harvest garlic scapes – for eating and for learning.

“Garlic scapes are the delicate and gracefully looped, edible garlic flower stalk that begins to emerge from garlic plants this week in the Garden State of New Jersey,” Kinsey and Bianca Aniski, E.J. School Student Health Services, noted in a joint press release.

“The spring harvest was linked to the curriculum by all grade levels, PreK3 to Grade 2, at the E.J. School,” they explained. “Garden-based learning at this elementary school is cross-curricular, and while rooted in the obvious arenas of math and science, the garden is a teaching tool for all subjects, from literacy and phonics to Spanish and art, then onwards to music and technology.”

The first-grade classes, said Aniski, planned “a garden scavenger hunt for nouns, verbs and adjectives, as well as a garlic scape taste test.” A scape pasta salad was also on the menu.

After experiencing the outdoor classroom firsthand, Kinsey remarked, “The kids were fantastic and really enjoyed working in the garden and tasting the garlic scape pasta. I totally enjoyed the entire experience, the pasta was delicious, and I hope to be invited back again.”

As a Family and Community Health Sciences faculty member, Kinsey works to educate people of all ages to improve their lives “in the areas of nutrition, diet and health, food safety, family financial and resource management, human development at all ages, and leadership development,” as noted at rutgers-atlantic.org/fchs. “We provide unbiased, research-based information and strategies to help you enjoy life and strengthen your community.”

Kinsey and Aniski worked together to create nutritious, easy-to-make recipe videos that showcase the school’s seasonal vegetables, available via the elementary school’s garden website, digginginthedirt.org. Find the garlic scape video recipe at vimeo.com/170507590.

Also last week, in addition to picking peas, radishes, spinach, strawberries and the garlic scapes, the students saw their schoolyard garden – established in 2010 via a ShapingNJ Healthy Communities grant – receive a new cedar fence. “The fence renovation was completed through the 2015 grant funding from AtlantiCare’s ‘Healthy School, Healthy Children’ program and a special projects grant from the Garden Club of Long Beach Island,” said Aniski. —*J.K.-H.*