

# How to harvest kale leaves, buds



**Gardening**  
Carol Savonen  
Guest columnist



In the spring, green flower buds grow on last year's kale plants. Pick and enjoy them in salads or stir-fry dishes.  
CAROL SAVONEN/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

**Question:** I have several giant "old growth" kale plants in my garden from last year. They have thick woody trunks, but are putting out leaves and the beginning of flower buds like mad. If I leave these, will they bloom and die? Should I plant new kale plants and tear these out? Any advice is appreciated.

**Answer:** Lucky you! Last year's kale is a good thing, in my world. I have a half dozen of these behemoths out in my raised beds as well. Some of them are almost three feet tall with stems that are 2 inches thick.

Last summer and fall-planted kale plants start growing again when winter's temperatures warm and the days lengthen. I've been harvesting the new leaves for the past six weeks and putting them in salads and stir frying them.

Even better than the leaves are the kale flower buds, called kale "raab." The stems below the flowering buds thicken and become much like broccoli raab. Kale raab is just as delicious and in my opinion, more tasty and tender than its broccoli cousin. Raab is just the old European term for any flower bud in the cabbage family.

Go out with your harvest basket (and bring your reading glasses if you are of a certain vintage) and look closely at your kale plant. You'll see green buds forming. Pinch or cut the buds off an inch or two down the stem. Don't hesitate to include a few leaves. I can usually harvest kale raab like this for a month or more each spring. But ultimately, the size of the new buds diminishes each time the flowers regrow. Eventually, they are not

worth harvesting.

If you want new kale plants from the old, let your kale flower and set seed. Lovely yellow blossoms attract bees like crazy. At this stage, the flowers are lovely in salads.

After flowering and pollination, elongated seed pods form. These shatter to plant themselves if you let them. If you watch your plant carefully, you can collect the seed before it all scatters on its own. Then you can plant your seeds where you want them. Or save some for your next few plantings.

I kind of have a feral garden, so I let a kale plant or two set seed each growing season. I end up with too many new kale plants, which is not a problem. I get rid

of them by harvesting the young plants for early summer salads. I don't think I've purchased kale seed for the past 20 years. Come to think of it, the plants I fed upon last week are the 20th generation descendants of seed I bought in 1998.

Once it has gone to seed, the kale plant will die, as that's what annual plants do. To extricate a big dying kale plant out of the ground is sometimes difficult, even with a garden fork. I've resorted to cutting kale plants down with a pruning saw. My dogs love kale "trunks," and chew on them and fetch them like bones. I've even caught them trying to bring a giant kale stem into the house.

Here's my favorite way to cook kale raab. Pick at least a quart or more of buds and leaves. Chop them into half-inch lengths. Take a big sauté pan and put a tablespoon of olive oil and a few red pepper flakes. Heat to medium high, then put in chopped kale. Stir to coat all leaves with oil. Add sea salt to taste. Stir-fry for a few minutes until leaves wilt and begin to brown. Lower heat to simmer, put on your pan lid and let them naturally steam for a minute or more. Turn the heat off. Then press a clove or two of garlic and the juice of half of a lemon into the greens. Stir and serve. Possible additions: a handful of raisins and toasted chopped walnuts. Delicious!

## Elk killed illegally, antlers taken near Silver Falls

Zach Urness Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Police are asking for help in identifying the person responsible for illegally shooting a large elk, taking its antlers and leaving it to waste near Silver Falls State Park.

On April 2, troopers from the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division received a call of a dead elk off of Silver Ridge Road west of Oregon's largest state park.

Troopers located what they described as a large branch antler bull elk and determined that it had "been shot and killed with a high power rifle," officials said in a news release.

The antlers were taken and the entire carcass was left to waste, officials

said. "The antlers were broken off at the bases and will appear similar to a naturally shed antler," OSP said. "Troopers were able to recover a bullet from the elk carcass and are seeking the public's help in identifying a suspect."

Police said the bull was likely shot over Easter weekend, between March 30 to April 1.

The elk hunting season ranges from October to December, depending on location and species.

Any information can be forwarded to Senior Trooper Chris Boeholt in the Salem office of OSP Fish and Wildlife Division via the TIP line: 1-800-452-7888.

A Turn-In-Poachers (TIP) reward is available for information leading to a conviction.

## ORCA

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Addressing mental health problems can often enhance academic achievement, and there are options at school if your child needs certain accommodations. A HHS study noted that when children facing serious mental health disorders accessed services, their school attendance and grades improved.

It's often difficult for your child to ask for help when they're hurting, so parents need to be good listeners. Reassure your child that dealing with fear, sadness and other emotions can be extremely difficult, and speaking to a doctor, counselor, or therapist can be very helpful.

Explain that having a mental health issue is common and they can get better. Most importantly, remind your child you are there for support every

step of the way. You can also provide additional resources like the Oregon Youth Line 1-877-968-8491 or text: teen2teen, 839863.

The young lady I mentioned earlier is now studying the brain in college hoping to someday treat patients. She's also giving back what she's been given, volunteering to reduce the stigma around mental illness through Keep Oregon Well, and in May she'll receive a Hero's Award from the advocacy group.

For parents, every day is an important day to advocate for their child's mental well-being and help them reach their full potential.

*Jesse Rorvig is an Oregon Connections Academy High School counselor from Portland. More information about Oregon Connections Academy is available at [www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com) or by calling (800) 382-6010.*

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