In days gone by, no food was wasted. This year with rain after rain, so many people’s gardens are just not producing like expected. It may be time to reconsider what can be eaten from the garden – the usual and the less common – and make the most of what does grow.

Texas Cooperative Extension has an interesting guide called *Secondary Edible Parts of Vegetables*. It describes the most familiar parts of a variety of vegetables. It also includes other parts of the same plant that could be eaten, though it may take some creativity to maximize the stronger or milder flavors associated with those parts. For example, typical fresh greens used for salad or otherwise eaten raw include spinach, a variety of lettuces, cabbage or even turnip greens. Other greens include the leaves of snap beans, lima beans, carrots, cauliflower, kohlrabi, okra and peas. Some greens, such as beet and broccoli leaves, have a strong flavor but can enhance and liven up a salad made from other milder greens and have the benefit of added nutrients. Sweet potato leaves, for example, bring the added value of extra protein, a nutrient not usually associated with greens. And of course, many of these greens may also work well cooked. Likewise, greens can be canned, following the recommendations for canning spinach and other greens.

With lower production, whether in the garden, at a farmers market or vegetable stand or in a store, make the most of the vegetable by using all its edible parts. For example, most people eat the “flower” of a head of broccoli. The stems can also be used – cooked or cut into broccoli sticks for a healthy snack. And the leaves can be eaten. Likewise, the outside of a sweet pepper is the most likely part to be used. But the seeds and membrane are also edible and can be added to a stir-fry, stew or other dish.

There are also wild greens that are edible and nutritious and free for the eating for those who have them growing on their property. Oregon State University Extension Service has a nice guide called *Edible Wild Greens: An Introduction*, with information on identification, use and nutritional value. The Missouri Department of Conservation also has some recipes for using these wild edibles.

For more information on making the most of vegetables, or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.

(Written 8/7/15)