

## Amazing Asparagus

We eat multiple parts of plants - roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds. Plant based foods are a source of fiber, which our body needs.

My favorite stem to eat is asparagus. Other common stems are with leaf vegetables (spinach and Swiss chard), celery, and rhubarb.

Growing up my sister always tried to annihilate the asparagus with the mower. Although she had multiple lectures by my parents, she wasn't banned from mowing duty and still continued to "accidentally" mow it down.

On Thursday, something amazing appeared in my garden... an asparagus stem that measured almost 2 inches wide but only about 3/8 inches in thickness! I let it grow for a few more hours and took photographic evidence with a reference object before cutting at the base. (Note - asparagus likes heat and can grow several inches in a few hours).

I happily offered asparagus "show and tell" with my un-enthusiastic family. My husband commented, "I'm glad the wide asparagus has captured your attention."

I also took a reference photo with a ruler in my kitchen and sent photos to K-State Research and Extension's horticulture expert. The expert hasn't replied - either he is in awe or can't be bothered with non-sense "my asparagus is wider than yours" correspondence. I haven't posted on social media - would people believe it was true?!

Instead, I'm taking the "widest Asparagus to ever appear in the Reid garden" on public tour at local farmers markets. When you see posters reminiscent of a traveling carnival show, you'll know you are in the right place.

The "widest asparagus to appear in the Reid Garden" will be featured with Power of Produce youth activities this week at farmers markets in Arkansas City (Tuesday, 4-6:30 Wilson Park) and Winfield (Saturday, 7:30 - 11 a.m. Entrance to Island Park). Youth visitors will have learning activities and tasting options to learn about food. Youth participants earn POP Bucks that can be spent with market vendors on fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs and nuts. A co-sponsor of the Power of Produce program is Cowley County Farm Bureau Association and Agents.

*Last minute addition:* The horticulture expert replied that the odd growth is fasciation, which translates to banding or bundling. It may be caused by hormonal imbalance, a random genetic mutation or induced by environmental factors. In most cases fasciation is just a random oddity.

Since you have made it this far in this article, if you bring a physical copy of this story to the market (OR show me the digital link on your smart phone), I will pay the first 20 visitors to each market a nickel. I may make it big and you - readers of the Courier-Traveler - can be part of my origin story. Until then, enjoy eating various parts of plants. If you have horticulture questions (with or without fasciation), contact K-State Research and Extension Cowley County at 620-221-5450.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.

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