Add Some Asian Flavors

More tasty and nutritious Asian vegetable favorites are showing up in supermarkets and farmers markets nationwide every spring. If you have relegated these tasty veggies to the category of tasty exotics mostly encountered in restaurants, you'll find adding easy to grow Asian vegetables to your garden will make them part of delicious everyday cooking.

Spring is a perfect time for gardeners to explore Asian flavors that brighten up winter-jaded appetites. We import the best varieties of seed for Asian specialities from their countries of origin and many are especially suited to cooler conditions.

April In The Trial Garden

So many seedlings! All of the spring sown seedlings are popping up as the days and nights get warmer, and everything is full of vigor this time of year. I am really excited about new flower mixes that encourage butterflies and bees: we are trying out a specially formulated Monarch Mix and a Beekeeper's mix. These are planned to attract and provide both forage and habitat for Monarch butterflies and pollinating bees.

These flowers blends are easily sown by simply broadcasting the seeds across a well worked seed bed aiming for 1-2 inch spacing and then raking the seed lightly to cover with soil. I find it is helpful to sprinkle a very light layer of compost over the top of the bed for extra coverage and to hold in moisture. Then water the bed with a very gentle spray.

Because our trial garden has every creature imaginable that loves to feast on small seedlings, we cover freshly sown beds with bird netting until the plants are large enough to fend for themselves.

One necessary task we do a lot of this time of year is thinning seedlings. Thinning out seedlings gives each plant enough root space to mature to full size and not get stunted through crowding. Swiss chard requires about 8-10 inches of space between plants so have room to grow into large vase- shaped plants with many leaves to enjoy at maturity. The thinned out seedlings can easily be transplanted to other areas of the garden or eaten as baby leaf greens.

Recipe Of The Month

Sesame Spinach

Subtle oriental seasonings are perfect with fresh spinach and sesame finishes the dish.