

Gardeners' Market open 4-6 p.m. Thursdays in South Park

By Jenna Solomon

The Gardeners' Market season is underway with fresh, affordable local produce for sale from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursdays in South Park. Local vendors also will be selling eggs, baked items, other foods and handicrafts. The market will be open every Thursday through Oct. 3, except for July 4.

Gardeners' Market is coordinated by Healthy By Design, a community health promotion coalition of Billings Clinic, Intermountain Health and RiverStone Health. Now in our 14th season, the Gardeners' Market is your go-to spot for summer fun and learning more about healthy food.

Twenty-seven local vendors participated in Gardeners' Market last year. The market celebrated Senior Day, Active Transportation Day and National Farmers Market Week. We hosted Harvest of the Month taste-testing, featuring foods such as beets, fresh herbs and summer squash.

Shopping local provides more than great tasting food. It ensures you get produce at its peak ripeness and the chance to meet the farmers who grew it. Eating fresh, local produce also offers numerous health benefits, such as higher nutrient content and better flavor.

The market features handicap-accessible parking and wide sidewalks. The Gardeners' Market is a relaxing and welcoming place to shop.

Affordable food

Market vendors accept multiple forms of payment, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Senior Farmers Market Coupons and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Farm Direct checks. Cash, credit and debit cards also are welcome.

This year, we will again have experts on hand with recipes and tips for preparing summer veggies. The market is a great place to learn more about home gardening. Something fun is happening every week. Look for family-friendly activities, information on programs for older adults and occasional live music.

Reading Rocks

Reading Rocks, a summer program of the Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, also will be at South Park near Gardeners' Market from 5:15 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays through July 25, except for July 4. Reading Rocks starts with a guest story teller reading a book to the group. Then children preschool through middle school are invited choose books to read. Each child gets to select one free book to take home.

Whether you are trying to incorporate more nutritious foods into your diet, hoping to make better food choices in general or looking for a fun afternoon activity, the Healthy By Design Gardeners' Market is a great place to start.

Weekly newsletter

The Gardeners' Market weekly newsletter provides recipes, tips and vendor spotlights. Please visit www.hbdyc.org/market to sign-up for the weekly market newsletter. For more information on Gardeners' Market, like Healthy By Design on Facebook.

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