

Madrid:

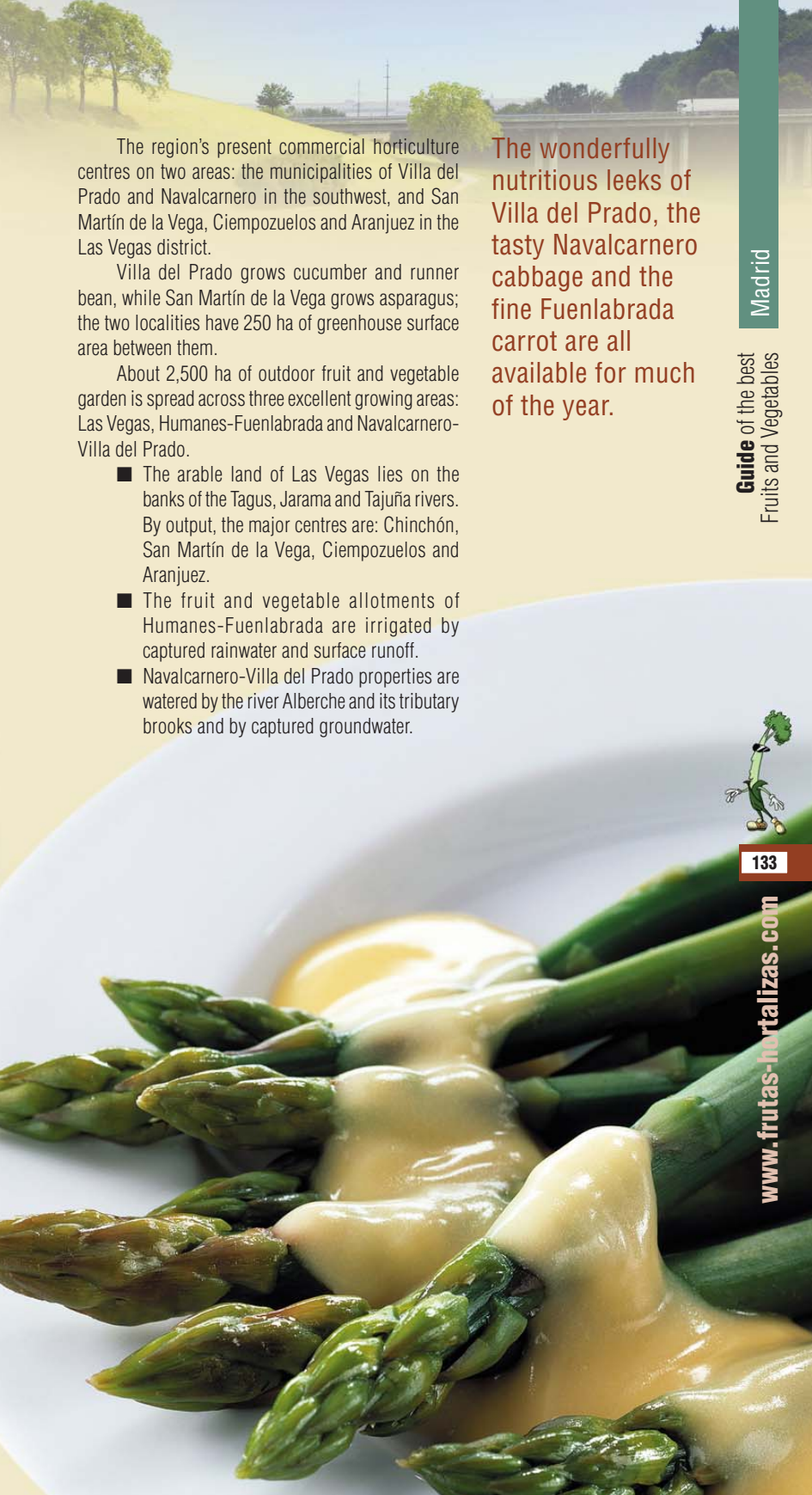
high-quality fruit and vegetables



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Commercial horticulture clusters chiefly in two districts, the southwest and Las Vegas.

Forty to fifty years ago, the urban cores of the Madrid region - like the city of Madrid itself - were surrounded by belts of fruit and vegetable gardens. The residents of that time still remember urban market gardens like La China and Vallecas, suburban ones like Perales del Río, Fuenlabrada and Leganés on one hand and Arganda, Velilla de San Antonio and Mejorada del Campo on the other, and more distant properties like Guadarrama, Alberche, Henares, Bajo Jarama, Tajo and Tajuña, all of which supplied the city's markets with seasonal produce.



The region's present commercial horticulture centres on two areas: the municipalities of Villa del Prado and Navalcarnero in the southwest, and San Martín de la Vega, Ciempozuelos and Aranjuez in the Las Vegas district.

Villa del Prado grows cucumber and runner bean, while San Martín de la Vega grows asparagus; the two localities have 250 ha of greenhouse surface area between them.

About 2,500 ha of outdoor fruit and vegetable garden is spread across three excellent growing areas: Las Vegas, Humanes-Fuenlabrada and Navalcarnero-Villa del Prado.

- The arable land of Las Vegas lies on the banks of the Tagus, Jarama and Tajuña rivers. By output, the major centres are: Chinchón, San Martín de la Vega, Ciempozuelos and Aranjuez.
- The fruit and vegetable allotments of Humanes-Fuenlabrada are irrigated by captured rainwater and surface runoff.
- Navalcarnero-Villa del Prado properties are watered by the river Alberche and its tributary brooks and by captured groundwater.

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The cucumbers of Villa del Prado - of the short kind, as preferred by consumers - are ripe for picking in April. May is the month of the tender Romaine lettuce of Fuenlabrada, Navalcarnero and San Martín de la Vega, and of the ever-popular spring onion.

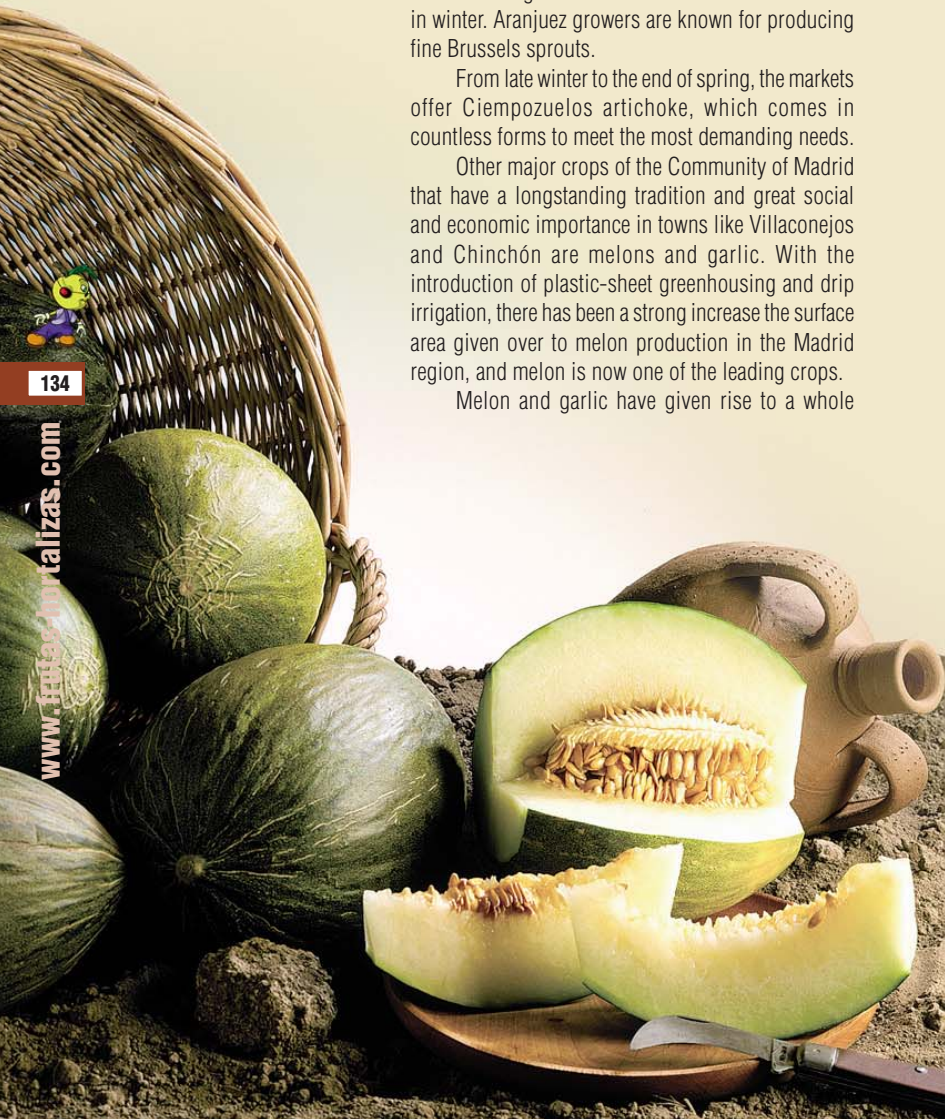
June through to March is the season of Villa del Prado chard, with its tender white stalks. The same village's runner beans - narrow, straight, flat and threadless - become available in August.

Cauliflower reaches the market in autumn, while red cabbage - which has become a traditional Christmas vegetable in Madrid - becomes available in winter. Aranjuez growers are known for producing fine Brussels sprouts.

From late winter to the end of spring, the markets offer Ciempozuelos artichoke, which comes in countless forms to meet the most demanding needs.

Other major crops of the Community of Madrid that have a longstanding tradition and great social and economic importance in towns like Villaconejos and Chinchón are melons and garlic. With the introduction of plastic-sheet greenhousing and drip irrigation, there has been a strong increase the surface area given over to melon production in the Madrid region, and melon is now one of the leading crops.

Melon and garlic have given rise to a whole



range of handling and distribution facilities that are key to the rural economy of the Las Vegas district.

The city of Madrid continues to be the region's main market.

The proximity of a market of 5 million consumers means that regional produce can be readily brought to market very fresh and at a low cost.

Produce is sold by growers directly in the huge Mercamadrid wholesale market. Products are sold to retailers and consumers on the farm properties themselves and in local day-markets.

Produce from the Community of Madrid accounts for 15% of input to Mercamadrid.

The fruit and vegetable sector of the Madrid region keeps up a high standard of quality. It uses modern cultivation techniques, but, even in greenhouse properties, the use of technology is 'soft'. Research by the regional agriculture and rural development unit shows that pesticide residues are entirely absent from most of the region's fruit and vegetables, and, where traces were present, they were invariably below legally permitted levels.

The agriculture and rural development unit of the regional department of economy and technological innovation is making a major effort to work with and support the region's farmers. One initiative among others is the introduction of the guarantee mark Villa del Prado Huerta de Madrid, which will help enhance the value-added of fruit and vegetables under the label.



Madrid's fruit and vegetable farms benefit from their location near the capital. The proximity of a market of 5 million consumers means that regional produce can be readily brought to market very fresh and at a low cost.





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IBERIAN SALADS AGRICULTURA ... 220



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Alimentos de Madrid



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