

Herbs for your garden

Over the last few weeks we've looked at starting a vegetable garden for the coming spring. An essential for a vegetable garden is an herb garden. With an herb garden you can grow many, many herbs and spices that add flavor and zest to your cooking. You can grow herbs in just about anything. Herbs can be grown in pots, in hanging baskets, in containers, or even in your open garden. Some ornate gardens have knot gardens for herbs or a laid out wheel garden in which a different herb occupies each segment of the wheel. How you plan your herb garden is up to you, but allow plenty of space. Then make a list of the herbs you use the most, and look over a few books on herbs. No matter how many you grow, you'll always want to have room for a few more, especially if you are a good cook.

Many herbs are perennial: that is, they come up every year, so you'll only need to make one sowing or buy one or two plants. If you grow some of your herbs in pots, you'll be able to take them indoors for the winter and have fresh herbs all year long.

The sidebar gives an idea of the common herbs that you might want to grow. In many cases, I have shown a single herb, such as basil, but you can buy 20 to 30 different kinds of basil, such as lemon, Thai,



The Island Garden

By Roger Marshall

French, Italian bush, Italian flat leaf, and many more. Similarly, parsley comes in curled, wild, or flat leaf. The mint family has many, many varieties, but you need to be very careful with mint and only grow it in a pot or a contained area. It can be a highly invasive weed.

Grow herbs the same way you grow vegetables. Keep them weeded, well watered, mulched, and you should have little problem. Be careful which herbs you let go to seed. Oregano can spread like wildfire if you let it go to seed. I have volunteer oregano growing in the lawn, in the flower beds, and in odd spots around the yard. Each spring I dig them up and put the strongest back in the herb garden. But many herbs you want to go to seed. Herbs such as coriander and dill, where both the seeds and leaves can be used, are easy to grow and dry, and give a double yield. Pick the leaves as the plant is growing, and later harvest the seed heads.

Try some of these

Perennial herbs	Annual herbs	Basil	Basil (it may not last long)
Sage	Basil (various)	Chive (and flowers)	
Thyme	Curled Parsley	Sorrel	
Comfrey	Flat leaf parsley	Watercress	Poisonous herbs
Lavender	Dill	Dandelion	Foxglove (digitalis)
Scented geranium	Coriander	Chicory	Lily of the valley
Horseradish	Cilantro	Herbs for pots	Opium poppies (usually blue)
Mint (various)	Arugula	(take indoors for the winter)	Poke
Sorrel	Peppers (cayenne etc)	Scented geranium	Cowslip
Curry plant	Cardamom	Bay bush	Rue
Chives	Cumin	Rosemary	Castor oil plant
	Salad herbs	Oregano	
	Arugula	Parsley	
	Mint		

You will need to watch basil carefully too. It grows fairly slowly but seems to go to seed very fast. If you keep picking the top off the plant, you can often get a long yield as it keeps trying to grow out and make seed. Around August, you should start new basil plants so that you have fresh basil until around Thanksgiving. It doesn't seem to last much beyond that.

Most woody herbs such as sage, oregano, lemon grass, and thyme can easily be dried. Simply hang them in a cool, dry place until they dry. Then comb the leaves off the stems, crush the leaves, and store.

Herbs such as parsley and ba-

sil are more difficult to preserve. I chop parsley and freeze it in ice cube trays with a little water. About half a cube is equivalent to two tablespoons. When I need parsley for soup I simply drop a half cube in the soup. I preserve basil by making pesto and freezing it also in

ice cube trays. A full sized cube is enough pesto for two.

Herbs are simple to grow, easy to maintain, and give results far beyond their size. Try growing your own next season and enjoy much more vibrant tastes in your food.

Walking in a winter wonderland

Slocum Grange will be having their next meeting on Friday, Jan. 12, at 7:30 p.m. at Slocum Grange Hall, located on 96 Slocum Rd. in North Kingstown. The program for the evening will be about "Walking in a Winter Wonderland." All are welcome

to attend. Visitors are expected from Exeter Grange. The Women's Activity Committee of the Grange is accepting donations of baby hats and booties to be sent to South County Hospital in Wakefield. For more information, call Linda Sullivan at 783-0860.

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