

KITCHEN HERB-POT PLUS SEEDED PEAT POTS



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OBJECTIVES:

EDUCATIONAL

Discuss the uses of herbs - culinary, medicinal, used in crafts, used in landscaping, to attract butterflies, and why herbs are valuable.

Participants will also learn tips on caring for their herbs, pruning basil, and drying herbs.

ACTIVITY

Participants will transplant 3-5 culinary herbs into a pot, and plant additional herb seeds in peat pots.

TAKE AWAY

Participants will take their herb pot and their seeded peat pots back with them. They will also take handouts with them regarding maintaining their herbs, a culinary herb guide, drying herbs, and recipes.

MATERIALS:

(Plan for 8-10 patients. Eight is supposed to be the maximum, but sometimes we get 10.)

- ___ Pens
- ___ Markers
- ___ Dishpans for dirt (3 available in BRI supply cabinet)
- ___ Watering cans (2 available in BRI supply cabinet) or individual watering bottles for patients to use
- ___ Name tags for patients (check BRI supply cabinet)
- ___ Example of completed project you're doing
- ___ A extra set of the patient-project materials listed below in order for you to demonstrate the project.
- ___ Completed presentation forms (1 to BRI and 1 mailed to ext. office)

LESSON PLAN: KITCHEN HERB-POT

MATERIALS *(Continued)*

- _____ Your clean receipts for materials purchased (give to BRI therapists)
- _____ Other

SPECIFIC ITEMS NEEDED for this project:

- Optional, newspapers to catch dirt
- Potting soil
- 8-10” plastic pots with drain trays
- Plastic bags (“baggies”) and rubber bands
- Small culinary herb plants, e.g. basil, chives, sage, thyme, rosemary, mint, oregano
- 2-4 herbal seed packets, *for example:*
 - *chives* (7-14 days germination)
 - *Greek oregano* (10 days germination/NOTE: Seeds are like dust.)
 - *coriander (also known as cilantro)* (10 days germination)
 - *bouquet dill* (6-21 days)
 - *borage* (5-15 days germination)
 - *lemon balm* (germination 14-21 days)
 - *spearmint* (7-10 days germination)
 - *summer savory* (7-14 days germination)
 - *sweet marjoram* (10 days germination)
 - *thyme* (10-20 days germination/NOTE: Seeds are like dust.)
- Leaves of various fragrant herbs, e.g. sage, pineapple sage, mint, dill
- Peat pots (Depending upon the size of the plants and how many you are using, 6” pots are good for 5 plants.)
- Wooden plant sticks or popsicle sticks
- Marking pens
- *Optional, plant name markers for kitchen herb pot*

HANDOUTS? *Handout #1 - Maintaining Your Herbs*
 Handout #2 - Culinary Herb Guide
 Handout #3 - Guidelines for Harvesting and Drying Herbs
 Handout #4 - Herbal Recipes

BEFORE CLASS

1. IF YOU WILL BE PROPAGATING TO CREATE PLANTS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS TO USE, ALLOW A FEW MONTHS TO PROPAGATE. This will help you to stay within BRI’s allowed reimbursable expenditures.

BEFORE CLASS *(Continued)*

Basil is easy to grow from seeds. Just make sure it's in a warm environment, as it likes have temperatures in the 70's during the day and no lower than 55 degrees at night.

You can also propagate with cuttings. Rosemary develops roots easily most all year round. Be aware that many plants, such as sage, only will develop roots from their cuttings when they are in a growth period, rather than a dormant period, such as winter.

2. You may also divide part of your existing plants, such as thyme and mint.
3. Drill drain holes in bottom of pots, if needed.
4. *Optional, prepare plant name markers for kitchen herb pots.*
5. Prepare an example of the kitchen herb-pot project.

DURING CLASS

1. When you have participants introduce themselves in the beginning of the program, ask them about their knowledge about herbs, their favorite ways to use (fresh, dried, decorative, crafts, etc.), and if they have any pleasant memories of herb smells.
2. Break apart herb leaf samples and have participants smell.
3. Talk about the requirements for successful herb gardening, and how basil should be trimmed for better production. *Optional - PowerPoint presentation.*
4. Have the participants transplant their herb plants into their kitchen herb pots.
5. Have participants choose herb seeds they'd like, and plant them in the peat pots.
6. Write plant name on wooden plant sticks or popsicle sticks.
7. Place peat pots with plant-stick labels in baggies and secure with rubber bands.
8. Participants will take their kitchen herb pots and seeds peat pots to their rooms. They may transplant the herbs to an outdoor space, once home, when they're ready.

MAINTENANCE

See Handout #1, "Maintaining Your Herbs."

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS:

It is not difficult to grow herbs in this area; they are pest and disease resistant. Any soil suitable for vegetables and moderately fertile and well supplied with organic material is ideal. Good drainage is a must. In areas where there is poor drainage, raised beds will solve the problem. Raised beds may be made with metal edging, concrete blocks, bricks or wooden slabs. Concrete blocks also can provide planting pockets in the blocks for lime loving plants such as lavender.

Sage, rosemary, thyme, oregano, marjoram and mints need well drained but moderately moist soils. Many of these herbs will grow well as potted plants.

One to three herb plants will serve a family's culinary needs. It is often wise to purchase plants from the nursery rather than starting your crop from seed. One reason to purchase plants is the very long germination time for some seeds. Rosemary, sage and thyme are good examples. Parsley also takes approximately 28 days to germinate, but you may wish to have extra of these plants to share with friends.

The plants mentioned above are perennials and will last several years before new plants need to be started. Parsley is a biennial and in the second year the seed head indicates the plant will die. Sometimes parsley will reseed itself, making the gardener think it is a perennial.

Annuals such as dill, summer savory and the many varieties of basil should be purchased as seeds. Why pay \$2 - \$3.50+ for plants that grow like weeds! You can almost see basil grow before your eyes!

Harvesting and drying your herbs is an easy process. The best time to harvest herbs for drying is just before they start to set their flowers. Pick herbs early in the morning after the dew is off the leaves but before the heat of the day begins.

One hard and fast rule is never cut more than a third of the plant at a time. You should get at least three cuttings during the season from most herbs. Basil grows so fast that you can pinch a branch back to a two-leaf point and it will branch out. With basil you must be sure to pinch off the flower heads as they start. If they go to seed they have completed their life cycle and will start to die.

Dill is another fast growing annual. The ferny fronds can be pinched off, put a rubber band around 6 to 8 of the fronds and hang in a cool dry place to dry. When crackle dry,

INFORMATION/DESCRIPTION/FACTS *(Continued)*

remove the heavy leaves and place in a glass jar and use for dill weed. The dill heads will mature and when brown should be hung to dry. These can be covered with a brown paper bag that has holes punched to let the air circulate. The seeds will fall to the bottom of the bag or can be pulled off and stored in a glass jar and used as dill seeds. The seed heads used for pickles can be cut as soon as heads form.

HANDOUTS:

- 1) *"Maintaining Your Herbs"*
- 2) *"Culinary Herb Guide"*
- 3) *"Guidelines for Harvesting and Drying Herbs"*
- 4) *"Herbal Recipes"*

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MAINTAINING YOUR HERBS

1. Open the baggies of peat pots shortly after seeds germinate. Keep baggies around the sides of peat pots to catch draining water when watering.
2. Water plants, as needed when dirt starts to get dry.
3. To get bushier basil plants and extend the life of the plants, start trimming basils when they get about 6 inches tall, and then trim about every two weeks. When trimming basil, leave 2 pairs of leaves on each stem. Also pinch off flower buds as soon as they appear. See photo below.
4. Transplant outside when ready, if desired.
5. If keeping herbs in pot, trim other herbs as needed. If mint is in the pot, to keep it from “taking over,” pull out some of the mint plants as needed.

TRIMMING MINT



NOTE: Photo adapted from Click and Grow, (n.d.). How to prune basil. Retrieved April 24, 2018, from <https://www.clickandgrow.com/blogs/news/40231172-how-to-prune-basil>

CULINARY HERB GUIDE



Chives (*perennial*) - onion chive (garlic chive is more robust, hotter) on backed potato, in soups, on omelet and custard. Both leaves and flowers are edible. Repels aphids.

How It Looks - Height 10-15". Erect plant with fine green onion-like leaves. Pompoms of lavender flower heads.

How It Grows - Can seed, but germinates slowly. Divided clumps increase rapidly. Divide every 2-3 years. Likes well-drained, medium-rich soil in full sun.



Basil (*annual*) - set deep, will root along stem. Good for pesto, and with tomato, beans, squash, zucchini and pork. Dried leaves work well in sauces and stews.

Appearance - There are many varieties, ranging from the 8-inch-tall bush basil to the 1-foot-tall purple leaf opal basil to the 2-foot-tall Genovese, Thai or tiny-leaf piccolo basil. Has white flowers.

How It Grows - Likes well-drained, medium-rich soil in full sun. Pinch off flower buds when they are forming to encourage a bushy leaf growth. Propagate with seeds or cuttings.

Harvesting - Harvest when flower buds are forming.



Cilantro (*also known as coriander or Chinese*

Parsley) (*tender annual*) - Leaves are called cilantro and are used fresh in Mexican salsas, Indian curries and Chinese dishes. Seeds are the spice coriander, and are used in cookies and curries.

Appearance - Plant reaches up to 14 inches with feathery leaves.

How It Grows - Quick to turn to seed and turn bitter. Is a cool-weather plant. For Arkansas, direct sow in late winter or very early spring.

Harvesting - Leaves do not dry well.



Dill (*annual*) - Dill leaves for soup, cucumber and tomato salads, creamy dips and fish dishes, especially poached or grilled salmon. Seeds for dill pickles.

Appearance - A 2-to-3-foot plant with feathery leaves. Produces tiny clusters of yellow blooms that yield seeds. The variety Finnish Dukat dill has more leaves and fewer seeds than other varieties. Older varieties are large and often kept in the vegetable garden. Newer dills are compact and leafy; two good choices being "Bouquet" and "Fernleaf."

How It Grows - Likes well-drained, medium-rich soil in full sun. Goes to seed quickly. Likes Arkansas springs better. Arkansas's hot summers make it go to seed even faster. Best sowed directly in garden or started in peat pots, as it resists transplanting. Self-sows readily.





Lemon Balm (*Hardy perennial*) - Lemon scent, excellent in teas.

Appearance - Spreading plant with dark green wrinkled leaves and small cream-yellow flowers. Height 1-2 feet.

How It Grows - Likes moist, well-drained, medium-rich soil in full sun or partial shade. Propagate by seed, cuttings, or division. Important to remove spent flowers, as it reseeds readily and may become a nuisance.



Lemon Verbena (*perennial in frost-free areas/tender north of zone 8*) -

The best lemon-flavored herb. Scent and flavor strongly persists, even when dried. Flavor teas and alcoholic beverages with leaves or flowers. Also use in desserts, jams and fruit salads.

Appearance - Shrub-like plant with crisp, light green leaves, small white flowers. Height 2-4 feet.

How It Grows - Often grown in containers. Likes well-drained, medium-rich soil in full sun or partial shade. Cuttings from green stems which have begun to harden seem to root best.



Mint, Spearmint or Peppermint (*perennial-spreads*) -

Fragrant, common in tea. Dried leaves good in hot tea, potpourri and Middle Eastern dishes. Fresh leaves essential for mint julep and iced tea. Used in salads and desserts.

Appearance - Rapidly spreading plant with heart-shaped green leaves.



How It Grows - All grow rampantly in full sun to part shade. Likes moist environments. Set potted plants in the garden 2 feet apart in early spring. Harvest often. Many mints will cross pollinate, producing mints of inferior flavor and scent. Deadhead plants or remove seedlings to be sure your plantings stay true to type. Propagate by cuttings or division.



Oregano (*perennial*) - from Greek word “joy” - can take dry soil, especially used in Italian dishes, tomato sauces, egg-and-cheese combinations, potato salad, stuffing, and poultry and fish marinades. Use fresh in salads, as drying seems to bring out the pungent flavor. Greek oregano most commonly culinary oregano. Other oreganos often used for dried flowers and arrangements.

Appearance - Low-growing 12-inch-tall mat of small greenish-gray leaves topped with tiny white flowers.



How It Grows - Does best in well-drained soil. Set potted plants in the garden about 2 feet apart, and dig up and separate plants every two years. Prune and mulch over winter.

Where It Grow -: Does well in containers, but separate the roots annually.

Harvesting - Harvest leaves and stems just before flowers appear.



Perilla (*perennial*) - Asian, contrasting color. Use like basil. Makes tea. Serve with rice. Use lightly.



Rosemary (*perennial*) - Greek scholars wore rosemary garlands to stimulate the brain. Toss rosemary branches on the barbecue to flavor meats and fish. Prune tip for use in beverages. Use fresh or dried to flavor roast pork, chicken lamb, fish, and stuffings. Excellent in flavored oil for salad dressings. Other uses include fruit cups, vegetables, soups and stews, and marinades. Also used in herbal baths, and hair rinse for brunettes.

Appearance - Woody 1-to-3-foot-tall shrubs with needlelike leaves that give off an oily, pungent fragrance.

How It Grows - Hardy perennial in southern states but must be treated like an annual in the north. Set potted plant out 2 feet apart in sandy, dry soil in full sun after all danger of frost has passed. Water only once or twice to get it established, then let the rain take care of it.

Where It Grows Best - Okay in containers, but it's prone to disease indoors.



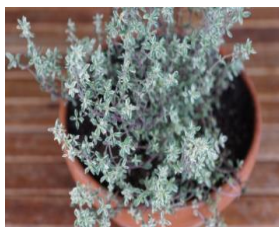
Sage (*Hardy perennial*) - Classic in Thanksgiving turkeys and stuffing. Good in pâté, eggs, meats, pasta, cheeses, sauces, soups, beef stews and vegetables. Also ornamental use in fresh or dried wreath arrangements.

Appearance - Bush 1-to-2-foot-tall compact plants with pebbly gray leaves. Very aromatic.

How It Grows - Prefers a sunny, dry, nonfertilized soil. Space potted plants 2 feet apart after all danger of frost has passed.

Where It Grows Best - Does well in containers, but can get very bushy.

Harvesting - Harvest leaves throughout the season and prune in fall.



Thyme (*perennial-replant every 4 years*) - from Greek word for perfume. Harvest anytime, upright plant or creeping, can take dry soil. Good with onions, eggplant, soups and stews, marinated steak, roast chicken, grilled lamb, beans and lentil casseroles. Are different varieties, including lemon-scented.

What It Looks Like - Scrubby 1-foot-tall evergreen plant with woody stems. Tiny green leaves and pale-pink to lavender flowers.

How It Grows - Buy potted plants and set them in dry, sandy soil, 2 feet apart, after all danger of frost has passed. Likes full sun. Propagate by seed or cuttings.

Where It Grows Best - Great container plant.

Harvesting - Harvest often to produce bushy plant. Prune and mulch for winter.



GUIDELINES FOR HARVESTING AND DRYING HERBS



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Timing - Best harvest time for drying is just before plants start to set their flowers. Pick herbs early in morning after the dew is off, but before the heat of the day begins.

Cutting - Cut whole stem off close to the body of the plant.

Drying - Gather stems into a bouquet, tie a string around the stems and hang herbs in a warm, dry, dark place with good air circulation. Drying should take 1-2 weeks.

Check the herbs everyday; if they are left for too long, especially in humid weather, they will lose their green color and turn brown. When rubbed between your fingers, a dried herb should crackle and crumble. If it bends and is not crisp, there is still moisture in the leaf.

To remove the last bit of excess moisture, preheat the oven to its lowest temperature, not over 200°F. Spread the herbs on baking sheets and place them in the warm oven for about five minutes. Repeat if necessary.

A quicker way is to use the microwave to dry. Place layer of leaves on paper towels in microwave, with another paper towel on top. Microwave on high for 1 to 2 minutes. Strip leaves off stems and place in clean jar with tight-fitting lid. Do not crumble leaves as this will release their essential oils. Pack them whole to retain the finest flavor.

Storing - Label jars and store away from heat and light. Home-dried herbs can be stored in jars or tins about a year.

HERBAL RECIPES



PASTA WITH SUMMER TOMATOES AND BASIL

by Susan Belsinger

About 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup diced sweet onion
3 large tomatoes, diced
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and black pepper
2/3 cup chopped fresh basil leaves
About 18 oz. fresh cheese ravioli or tortellini
Grated parmesan

- Bring a large, nonreactive pot of water to boil for cooking the pasta.
- In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion, stir and sauté for about 6 minutes. Add the tomatoes and garlic and season with salt and pepper; stir and cover.
- Reduce heat to medium low and cook for 5 minutes.
- Add the basil, stir, cover and cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat.
- Cook pasta till al dente. Drain, saving 1/4 cup cooking water. Add pasta and water to sauce and toss well.
- Serve hot and garnish with parmesan.

SERVES: 6

HERB VINEGARS

Harvesting sprigs of your favorite herbs when the plants are at their aromatic peak and putting them into vinegar for about four weeks are all that you have to do. They enhance salads and sauces, and are good for slaws, marinades, dressings, etc. all throughout the year. Part of the fun of making vinegars is experimenting with different herbs; often a combination of two or three herbs offers a pleasant surprise

Making Herb Vinegars

Some good choices of herbs for making vinegars are: anise hyssop, basil, especially the purple varieties; chive with chive blossoms; dill; lavender; all of the lemon herbs; lovage; mint, oregano; tarragon; and savory. Some favorite combos are chile peppers with oregano, sage, or thyme; a blend of some of the lemon herbs including lemon balm, lemon grass, lemon thyme, and/or lemon verbena with fresh gingerroot; and chive and dill with nasturtium flowers. A general rule of thumb is never to combine more than two or three herbs in a vinegar because the flavors become muddy.

Organic apple cider vinegar or good quality white wine or rice vinegar make the best herb vinegars. Apple cider vinegar and *umeboshi* plum (sometimes called *ume*) vinegars are healthy choices; however, they do not give the clean bright colors as a clear vinegar does. Red wine and balsamic vinegar are generally too strong, and distilled vinegar is too harsh for most herbs. Some people prefer the robust herbs such as oregano, rosemary, or even chiles with red wine vinegar. Experiment if this appeals to you. *Do not use distilled vinegar.* Rebecca Wood, author of *the New Whole Foods Encyclopedia* states, "It may be synthetic ethanol made by direct chemical oxidation of wood or fossil fuels. Distilled and other highly processed vinegars are mineral deficient, and when consumed, pull calcium and other minerals from the bones and tissues."

Harvest your herbs on a sunny morning, clean the springs if necessary and pat them dry. Fill clean jars about half to three-quarters full of the herbs you have chosen and cover them with vinegar. Before you screw the lid on, cover the mouth of the jar with plastic wrap. Set the jars out in the herb garden and let the sun do its work to infuse the herbs and vinegar for three to four weeks. After this time, bring the jars inside and remove the herbs by straining the vinegar. Pour the vinegar into smaller bottles, adding a fresh sprig of the herb if desired, and label. Store the vinegars in a cool, dark place and use them within a year.

by Susan Belsinger©, *Art of Flavor*, Ozark Folk School, 2005.

BASIC VINAIGRETTE

This recipe is a base for making vinaigrettes. You vary the oil, vinegar, and herbs to suit your palate. For instance, you can make this Italian-style with oregano, basil, and marjoram; a bit French with tarragon chervil and perhaps some shallot; go Asian with freshly grated gingerroot and some sesame oil in place of the olive oil. Another nice addition is about 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard. Be creative!

Makes about 2/3 cup

2 to 3 tablespoons vinegar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup olive oil

Freshly ground pepper

1 large clove garlic, squeezed or minced

About 1 tablespoon of fresh minced herb leaves or 1 teaspoon dried, crumbled herb leaves.

In a glass measuring cup, combine the vinegar with the salt and stir with a fork to dissolve. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil, stirring continually with the fork to emulsify the ingredients. Add the pepper, garlic, and herbs and stir well with the fork to blend. Taste for seasoning by dipping a lettuce leaf or salad green into the vinaigrette, and adjust as needed.

The vinaigrette may be kept in a jar in the refrigerator a week or two. Cool to room temperature before serving.

by Susan Belsinger©, Art of Flavor, Ozark Folk School, 2005.

MAKING HERB BUTTERS

Flavored butters are used on a number of foods from bread to fish, pancakes and waffles, to pasta, and every type of vegetable. They keep in the refrigerator for about one week, or in the freezer for up to three months. Basil, chive, coriander, dill, fennel, lemon balm, marjoram, nasturtium leaves and flowers, tarragon, and thyme all make delicious butters. Try experimenting with your favorite herbs and perhaps, add an edible flower for color. Generally a single herb or blend of two herbs are best when flavoring an herb butter.

To prepare 1/2 cup of herb butter, soften 1 stick of unsalted butter. Finely chop or cut the herbs into a chiffonade; about 2 tablespoons of herbs to 1/2 cup butter is a good ratio. Blend the herbs with butter. You may want to add a bit of salt or pepper, lemon juice, or even minced garlic or shallots, depending on how you are going to use the butter. Pack into a small crock and refrigerate or freeze until ready to use.

by Susan Belsinger©, Art of Flavor, Ozark Folk School, 2005.