

SEASONABLE SEASONINGS

Windowsill herbs ready in kitchen

By Marty Figley
special writer

ALTHOUGH SUMMER is past, your herb garden can still be a wonderful source of seasonings and surprises until old Jack Frost really does it in for the year.

The tender annuals such as basil will be the first to go, but others seem to be quite vigorous and can withstand some pretty cold temperatures. Dill, fennel and summer savory will probably be fine to use for awhile yet, while sweet marjoram, winter savory, sage, thyme, French tarragon and chives may be used a little longer.

The perennials may seem to be dead, but their root systems are still thriving and getting ready for next year's growth. Many of the perennials can be divided and/or newly planted in the fall to give them a good start for the spring season.

For those of you who would like an indoor herb garden, now is the time to take cuttings and pot up herbs for winter use. They can be grown in hanging pots, marching along a window sill or among houseplants.

One favorite herb can become a focal point on a kitchen table or counter if adequate light is provided. A sunny window, preferably facing south, is the ideal indoor location. Grow lights will give an even more robust harvest.

IF YOU DON'T wish to bring herbs in from the garden or bother with seeds, or if this is a first time undertaking, there are a number of herb centers from which plants for indoor gardening can be ordered.

If plants are mail-ordered, keep them in the small pots in which they arrive for two or three weeks so they can become acclimated to the home environment. Transfer to the next largest size pot when necessary. Keep the plants trimmed by frequent use, and they will live happily for the winter in the home and not outgrow their pots. Most herbs thrive best indoors when they are somewhat potbound, so choose the container size according to the plant.

Overwatering may be the biggest cause of failure, and if fertilizer is used, $\frac{1}{4}$ solution of the recommended amount is quite sufficient. Watering needs differ for specific herbs, so those requirements are given with each description.

When taking root cuttings, trim the roots and branches back by about a third to lessen transplant shock. Exceptions are chives, parsley and basil.

A sterile potting soil with perlite added for good drainage (1 part perlite to 4 parts soil) makes a good medium for the plants. Equal parts of sphagnum peat moss, perlite and vermiculite is a recommended soilless mix.

It may be wise to begin with one or two favorite herbs and then expand as you gain confidence and your success and interest grow along with the herbs. Following are a few suggestions to get you started on a new growing experience.

THYME

Lemon and common thyme are both easily propagated by removing some of the plants with a good root system. A soilless mix works well. Keep the plant moderately moist, but not soaked.

SWEET MARJORAM

Root cuttings made by pulling the clump apart will prolong the life of this annual. Pick the leaves a few at a time from around the plant so that it will keep its nice shape. Add some sand to the potting soil. Keep moderately moist.

BASIL

Best started from seed or purchased plants. Keep the seeds well-watered but not soaked. Nip the plants back when they are 2-3 inches tall so that the side shoots will develop for a more compact plant. You may bring in a plant from the garden and use it while the seeds sprout. Do not let this plant go to seed.

CHIVES

Pot this up from a clump for winter use. Keep it well watered and harvest the leaves by snipping them as needed. They can be frozen in a plastic bag quite easily for a special treat for a friend.

PARSLEY

If care is taken to dig up the long tap root, parsley can be lifted from the outdoor garden. It is preferable to sow seeds (after soaking them overnight). Place the pot in a plastic bag until seedlings appear. Remove the covering gradually, then thin so that three or four leafy plants remain. Mist occasionally and water well. These plants grow from the center, so harvest the outside leaves so the inner ones continue to develop.

ROSEMARY

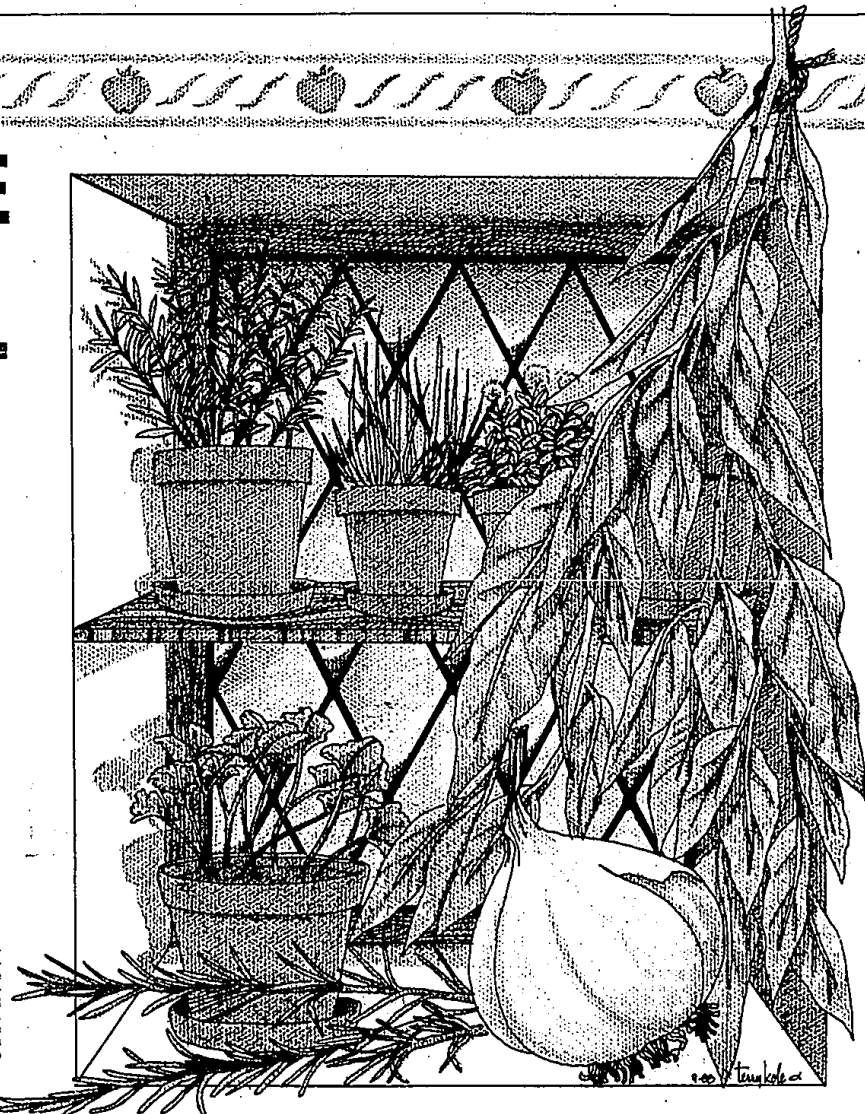
Cuttings of rosemary 4-5 inches

long will produce a new plant. Strip off the bottom leaves and use a potting mix as described previously with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sand and 1 tablespoon limestone added to each quart of soil. Set the pot in a plastic bag and keep it well watered. After the cutting has rooted, gradually remove the plastic covering. The roots should never be allowed to dry out; therefore a plastic container is recommended for this herb. Keep the soil moist, but not soggy... mist often.

FRENCH TARRAGON

Stem cuttings should be taken as with rosemary. Water regularly and harvest after the plant is well established. A root cutting can be established.

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A dash of fresh spice makes everything nice

THYME
Special Squash Bake
yellow summer squash or zucchini
butter
dry bread crumbs
chopped thyme leaves
grated parmesan cheese

Slice squash about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick and steam gently until barely tender. Drain and place in one layer in shallow buttered baking dish. Brown bread crumbs in a little butter, stir in a generous amount of thyme and scatter mixture over squash. Dot with butter, cover with cheese (to

your taste). Bake 350 degrees until cheese is browned.

MARJORAM

Slow-Oven Beef Stew
2 pounds beef stew meat (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch cubes)
2 medium onions, cut in eighths
3 celery stalks, cut 1-inch diagonal slices
4 medium carrots, pared, cut half crosswise and lengthwise
3 cups tomato juice (or vegetable juice cocktail)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup quick-cooking tapioca
1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
1 bay leaf
2 medium potatoes, pared, cut $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices
1 small sprig of marjoram

Put all ingredients except potatoes and marjoram into 3-quart casserole. Bake, covered, 300 degrees for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Remove bay leaf and add potatoes. Bake an additional 1 hour or until vegetables are tender. Twenty minutes before done, add marjoram, then remove before serving. Serves 8.

BASIL

Pasta-Stuffed Tomatoes
6 medium tomatoes
 $\frac{1}{4}$ pound vermicelli

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Frog legs delicious despite tadpoles

taste buds

chef Larry
Janes



SO WHAT'S HAPPENING to the frog leg industry in Michigan? A call to Kevin Dean, manager of Superior Fish and Seafood in beautiful downtown Royal Oak, shed a little light on where the frogs come from, and where they're going.

There are presently three major exporters of frog legs to the United States — Bangladesh, Indonesia and the State of India. However, that will soon change as Bangladesh has just imposed a ban on production.

Seems that the old frogs love bugs. With growing measures to increase productivity of farm yields, Bangladesh is using more pesticides to control the bug population and, in turn, is lowering

the bug population, making it just too darn expensive to feed the frogs. Dean says not to worry, however, as Indonesia and the State of India will surely increase their exports to counteract any depletion of supply.

Presently, Superior Fish and Seafood sells about 30 pounds over the counter in retail sales per week, but a whopping 2,000 pounds wholesale. Apparently folks like me would rather eat in greasy-spoon restaurants than at home.

Frog legs are sweet and very mild, and most who have tried them say they taste very close to chicken. I agree with the sweet and mild part, but frog legs can't come close to chicken in flavor because, in my opinion, they are tender and succulent with a far more delicate taste than plain old chicken.

In all honesty, they do look a little like chicken, especially because the meat turns a pale white when cooked, but at between \$5-6 per pound, retail, I want more flavor and texture than plain chicken.

Dean says the best way to prepare frog legs is to pan fry or saute over high heat, using a small amount of garlic butter. Six to eight minutes of cooking like this is enough for a skillet of the succulent game.

I can remember growing up in Wyandotte and after school, hiking down to the tracks with a few buddies, searching for stagnant ponds and armed with Mason jars that would hold what-seemed-to-be giant tadpoles.

Jimmy Millstein (whose father had all sorts of fishing equipment and nets) would sneak a long-handled seine net out of his garage so we wouldn't get our sneakers too muddy.

We used to call them pollywogs, and everyday I would venture to the basement and check the progress of my catch, only to begin noticing little legs sprouting and tails shrinking. Within a week or two, I'd have a mess of baby frogs.

Of course, in addition to making the girls scream, it also lifted the runs who, in turn, would make us set them free in the field behind the school. Those were the days. We wouldn't dare think of eating something like that. Ah, but times, they are a-changin'.

Now, whenever I visit a restaurant and notice frog legs on the menu, my mind is made up. I love frog legs.