

Herb garden can be gourmet's delight

Kitchen gardens yield a bounty of savory seasonings for summer recipes

By Cynthia G. LaFerie
special writer

For centuries herbs have worked their fragrant magic in recipes, potpourris, medicinal potions, and household remedies.

The ancient Greeks believed mint was an aphrodisiac, while some Victorians gathered sprigs of basil to present as tokens of love and good intentions. And in some cultures, the prolific parsley plant was revered as a fertility symbol.

Today's herb gardener is more likely to cultivate his or her crop for concocting meals rather than love potions.

"We're definitely seeing an increase in the popularity of fresh herbs. More people want to grow their own at home for cooking as well as for using in craft projects," says Mike Bovio, Greenhouse Manager at English Gardens Nursery and

Garden Center, West Bloomfield. By mid-May, he notes, his greenhouse stocks 60 varieties of herb plants — and they sell.

Bovio credits the health food movement for the revival in cooking with fresh herbs. Also influencing the trend are ethnic and gourmet recipes that call for fresh (and sometimes hard to find) herbal seasonings.

Herbs are fairly simple to start and maintain — whether you opt for just a few sprigs in a window box or several plants in old-fashioned herb garden beds. And if you plant a basic assortment near the kitchen door, everything you need for aromatic and flavorful meals, beverages, oils, and vinegars will be within easy reach.

You can get a head start on the growing season with nursery plants, though seed packets are available from mail-order catalogs or local nurseries, includ-



Whether a discreet part of a large, old fashioned garden, or in a window box arrangement, cultivating an herb garden puts everything you need for aromatic and flavorful meals, beverages, oils, and vinegars within reach.

Photograph by
LA FERIE

ing Frank's Nursery and Crafts and Bordine's Better Blooms garden centers.

Herbs make themselves at home in containers, which are often the answer for gardeners with limited time or yard space. Decorative as well as useful, potted herbs can be moved around the deck or terrace

for optimal sunlight exposure. (Some potted herbs can be brought indoors for the winter, if proper light conditions are provided).

"Like vegetable gardens, herb gardens require a fair amount of sun and

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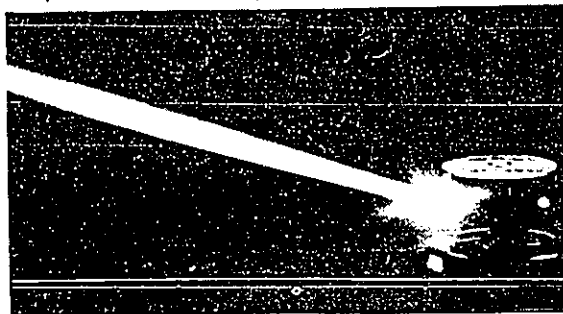
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