

Herb Gardens For Fragrance And Flavor

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Herbs are among the oldest plants known to man. They have been used for flavoring, medicine and fragrance since prehistoric times and they are plants that anyone can grow in their own garden.

Spices, on the other hand, generally come from exotic far-off places. There is a great interest in herbs these days.

If you want to find out more about herbs - how to grow them and how to use them - plan to attend the sale of herb plants and herbs that the Southern Michigan unit of the Herb Society of America is holding at the Cranbrook Greenhouse, 380 Lone Pine Rd. in Bloomfield Hills on Friday, May 18. The sale is from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., but judging from past experience, if you want to have a good choice you had better come early.

The proceeds from the sale are used by the society for

the development and maintenance of herb gardens at Cranbrook and at Greenfield Village. This dedicated group also conducts classes and lectures on growing and using herbs.

Recently members of the group conducted a workshop at the Clara Ford Garden Forum at Greenfield Village. Hundreds of enthusiastic participants lined up to taste samples of herb bread, herb butter, herb cheese balls and sip herb tea. Mrs. Malcolm Morley shared recipes with the group and gave tips for using herbs in cooking.

Mrs. Richard Genyk gave pointers for using herbs for fragrance - lavender to perfume the linen closet; a potpourri of flowers and herbs to freshen the living room.

Mrs. Walker Genyk told how to grow herbs. She suggested that a spot near the kitchen door is ideal so the cook can pop out and snip the herbs when she is ready to use them. Herbs can be used fresh in summer, and dried for winter use.

A well-drained sunny spot is needed. No special soil is required. If it is too rich, the growth will be lush, but the plants are apt to be deficient in the aromatic oils for which they are being grown.

Some of the herbs Mrs. Genyk suggests for the beginner include mint, marjoram, basil, sage, savory, chives and lavender. Some of these are used for flavoring and some for fragrance.

Lavender, one that is grown for its pleasant fragrance, is a perennial. You will probably start with a plant rather than seeds. It is great for the linen closet and fun to share with friends. The herb ladies suggest starting with a single plant, but warn that you will probably end up wanting a dozen.

Rosemary is also a perennial. This one is tender and must be brought inside in winter. It makes a good pot plant. The leaves can be used to flavor eggs and casseroles.

Sage is a good herb for the beginner. It is a popular seasoning in poultry stuffing, but can be used in many other dishes.

Chives are another good easy-to-grow herb for the beginner, but Mrs. Genyk asserts that all herbs are easy to grow.

Sweet basil goes great with tomatoes, either raw or cooked, and is superb in spaghetti sauce. It can also be used to make an herb vinegar.

Basil can be grown from seed, but there will probably be little plants available at the Cranbrook sale. There are several kinds of basil. Dwarf basil is best in a small area. The larger purple-leaf basil is a very decorative plant as well as tasty.

Marjoram, another annual is considered useful because its flavor blends well with other herbs.

Savory comes in two kinds - winter and summer. The winter savory is a perennial and the summer savory is annual. Both are good for flavoring soups, meat and vegetables.

Mints are perhaps the easiest of all to grow. In fact they tend to spread by underground runners. They are very invasive. The herb ladies suggest that you grow mint in a container sunk in the ground. Use something like a tomato juice can with both ends removed. This will keep the mint from spreading throughout the garden.

Another suggestion is to grow them in the cavity in a cement block.

There are numerous kinds of mint - more than most people realize. In addition to peppermint and spearmint, there are also lemon mint, orange mint, apple mint and several others. They are all good for mint teas, flavored vinegars, "garnishing" fruit cocktails and melon slices.

and of course mint juleps.

The Southern Michigan unit of the Herb Society of America is being organized by Mary Gerathy about five years ago, is a small group. There are only about a dozen members, but they are all involved and active so that they accomplish much more than would seem possible for such a small group.

In addition to the herb sale which is being conducted at Cranbrook on May 18, the Cranbrook Gardens Auxiliary will be on hand selling exotic hanging baskets, orchids, geraniums, and other plants.

The proceeds from this part of the sale will be used to benefit the Cranbrook House Gardens.

and other plants.

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