

Grow Your Own Fresh Herbs

Add a touch of spring to your home all year long. Consider growing some herbs in your home or a container or garden outside. Growing herbs can be a fun project for kids and may encourage them to try some different foods, too.

Soon you'll be adding extra flavor to your recipes without extra calories and sodium. Compared with the cost of fresh herbs available in some grocery stores, you will have a ready supply at a fraction of the cost.

Which herbs should I choose?

Many herbs used in cooking, including basil, chives, parsley, mint and oregano, grow well indoors.

What do I need for an indoor herb garden?

A sunny window sill with exposure to about five hours of light per day is ideal. Herbs also will grow if they get 10 hours of fluorescent lighting daily. Use a warm and cool bulb in your grow light. To grow herbs, you will need the following:

- A container at least 6 inches deep with holes in the bottom (for good drainage). Use a separate container for each type of herb.
- Well-draining, pasteurized potting mix.
- Seeds or small plants from a garden shop.

Plant seeds as directed on the package. Leave about an inch of space at the top of the container to allow for watering.



How do I care for my herb garden?

Treat your potted herbs like house plants. Water them regularly but don't overwater, which can lead to soggy roots. Snip the herbs often so they will grow full and lush. For best growth, use liquid fertilizer mixed with water as directed every week or two.

Visit
www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodwise
for more information.

This program is funded in part by USDA's Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. S.W., Washington, DC 20250 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

How should I use fresh herbs?

Rinse them well under running water and chop in tiny pieces. The idea is to expose as much of their surface area as possible. You can use fresh herbs in any recipe that calls for dried herbs.

As a rule of thumb, use about three times as much fresh herbs as dried. Here are some winning combinations:

- ✓ **Basil:** tomatoes, fresh pesto, spaghetti sauce, pizza, zucchini
- ✓ **Chives:** dips, potatoes, tomatoes
- ✓ **Cilantro:** fresh salsa, tomatoes
- ✓ **Mint:** carrots, fruit salads, tea
- ✓ **Oregano:** peppers, tomatoes, pizza, spaghetti sauce
- ✓ **Parsley:** potato salad, dips

When should I add herbs during food preparation?



In “hot” dishes such as soups and stews, add fresh herbs, such as basil, chives and cilantro, close to the end of cooking. Flavor can be lost with extended cooking. In “cold” dishes such as salads with dressings, add herbs several hours ahead of time to allow flavors to meld.

My herbs are growing really well. In fact, I have more than I can use. Can they be preserved?



Fresh herbs easily can be preserved by drying them in a dehydrator, oven on low or microwave. They also can be frozen. Contact your local Extension office for more information.

Herbed Dip

- 1 c. low-fat cottage cheese
- 4 Tbsp. low-fat plain yogurt
- 1 Tbsp. chopped onion or fresh chives
- 1 tsp. dried parsley (3 tsp. chopped fresh parsley)
- ¼ tsp. dried dill



Place all ingredients in blender. Blend thoroughly and place in container. Cover and refrigerate. Serve with fresh vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli and celery, or whole-grain crackers.



Makes 10 servings, 2 tablespoons per serving. A serving has 20 calories, 0.5 gram (g) of fat and 1 g of carbohydrate

Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contact the local office of the
NDSU Extension Service
for more information
on food and nutrition or
managing your food dollar.

