



PLANNING THE OUTDOOR HERB GARDEN

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Patty's Plants

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Dreaming and Planning

I just got my first garden catalog in the mail today. There was a pretty good snowstorm here in the mid-west last night and I knew I had to get out and shovel. But that garden catalog was calling my name, I could hear it saying, "You can shovel later, look at me now." I glanced one more time outside, then back at the catalog. The catalog won. I made some hot tea, sat down in my favorite chair and began paging through the garden catalog. Wow, there were some fun new varieties. I started dreaming about where I was going to put them. What didn't work last year? Where was my garden journal?

I know I wrote in it just a couple of months ago. I began to star just about everything in the catalog. Now, wait a minute, I can't have everything or can I? I must do some planning first so I don't get in over my head with more plants than I can handle at one time. Once I stopped daydreaming about all the new plants that I thought I had to have. I started to be a little more realistic about what I really wanted. I just got carried

away for a second. I wasn't thinking clearing. It was the catalogs fault. Yeah, that's it. Planning is one of the most important aspects. Sure, I would love to have it all. But, I need to have the time for all my garden plants and flowers, not just the herbs.

In this newsletter, I will tell you how to begin. I will give you things to think about before you purchase your plants. With just a little dreaming and planning you will be on your way to a successful herb garden of your own.



Patty's Winter Garden

Now, It's back to reality, time to shovel!

Size and Easy Access Matters

Size

Bigger is not better, especially for the beginner. Keep it manageable, you need to be able to enjoy it and have time to work in it. Make a sketch. Keep a Journal. You need to know what, where and when you planted. You also need to know what you liked and how it grew. Write down when you harvested each herb or even what kind of weather we were having.

Make the garden easy to access

Don't make the beds too wide. You'll want to be able to reach into it to prune what you want to use for the day. You'll be able to weed easier too. It's also nice to keep your edible herb garden close to your kitchen door. Especially if you plan on using them a lot in your cooking.



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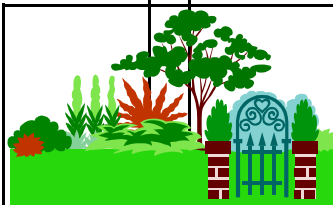
Grow a Variety and Have Some Contrast

Grow a variety

Don't waste growing space. It's more fun to grow and collect different kinds and compare them. You'll only need one of each perennial herb. They will spread and need to be divided someday. Annuals, you may want to plant a few more of the same varieties together. So they look full and established.

Have some contrast

Plant different leaf textures, shapes, sizes and colors. It's also nice to add veggies, annual and perennial flowers into your herb garden. There are many edible flowers that would



Have some contrast

work as well. Nasturtiums, violets, calendula are just a few. Go to: pattysplants.com to see my complete list of edible flowers. You can use containers of herbs in and around your garden or patio area. You may not have the space in your yard to plant a herb garden, use containers instead. Some herbs can be very invasive.

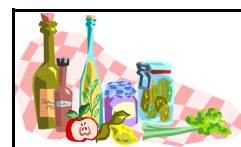
Some are not as hardy. These are the ones that you might want to bring indoors for the winter and grow them in containers. Rosemary, some lavenders, mints lemon verbena and basil would be good choices to put in containers.

Theme Gardens

When planning your herb garden, you may want to consider a Theme for it. Culinary, Medicinal, Edible Flowers, Teas, Biblical or even Astrological these are all different types of theme gardens. Whatever

Plant some vegetables and herbs together for a culinary container garden.
"Tomatoes love Basil"

garden you choose just have fun. Put your imagination to work. I have a mix of culinary, tea, edibles along with perennials and annual flowers in my garden. There aren't any real rules, you can do it your own way.



Choosing the Site

Most herbs would be happy with 5 to 6 hours of sun. If there is too much shade your herbs will be floppy with very little flowering. See the list of "Herbs for Certain Conditions" later in this newsletter. Be aware of what time of day the sun hits each area of your garden. Check to see how windy the area is. You might have to put in something to protect the more tender herbs. Maybe a screen like a container with a trellis that you can put a tropical blooming vine on or put in a garden

statue or a bench. Any feature that would block the wind. Also see how wet the site gets. If there are areas that the water just sits in. You may have to fix this or put a plant in that area that can take a moist spot.

Just a few things to think about this winter.



Patty's new spring garden



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Preparing the Soil

Prepare the soil just like you would for any other garden. Lay a hose down or spray the grass in the shape that you would like your garden to be in. **Make sure you know where utility lines are before tilling to deep.** Remove sod, weeds, existing plants. **If sod is not removed first, it will grow again into a clumpy mess.** I know first hand about that. My wonderful husband (and he is) was trying to help me. While I was gone, he tilled up a new space. I was raking out clumps forever. It was a good try though on his part. Dig at least 6-8" deep to loosen the soil. Good draining soil is important. If you have clay you will need to add a soil conditioner or sand. In a 10'x5' garden you will need at least a 50# bag of sand. I like to add either composted cow, chicken, horse manure, worming cast-

ing or even mushroom compost. The more organic material used, the better your soil will be. Contact your local county extension office if you would like to do a soil test first. You can also purchase soil test kits at your local garden shop or on-line. Now, it is true that herbs can survive in poor soil as long as the soil has good drainage. But:

Healthy soil is the key to healthy plants. You will have less pests and diseases.

If you feed the soil the soil will feed your plants. So spend time in preparing the soil first. It will make all the difference.



This soil looks like a brownie, good for a brownie not good for soil.



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Watering and Fertilizing

Water– Most herbs do very well in dry soil conditions. Water only to prevent wilting or when you feel it's necessary. Be sure at that time you water deeply and thoroughly. This way your plants will have a deeper stronger root system.

TIP: Herbs grown in harsh conditions will give you stronger scents and oils.

Fertilizing– Herbs don't need much fertilizing. If you've added enough organic materials to your soil you should be all set. You can top dress with a granular organic fertilizer mid-season.

Over fertilizing decreases the concentration of essential oils so the fragrance and flavors won't be as good.

Weeding and Mulching

Weeding– Use a hoe or hand pull. Never use a chemical weed killer with herbs. Especially when using them for eating or bathing. There are some organic weed products such as corn gluten but you can not grow herbs from seeds when using it because it keeps seed from germinating. It also won't help perennial weeds that come back from their root system.



Please don't spray chemical weed killers.

Mulching– This is why I use a mulch. If you mulch your herbs, you will have less weeds. An organic mulch such as mushroom compost or finely shredded bark will keep the soil a bit more moist but it will also keep the weeds from growing. Plus it will make your garden look better. It will keep the soil from splashing up on the leaves and causing any soil borne diseases from contacting your herbs.

Selecting Your Herbs

You may have seen this list in the November newsletter, I thought I would include it in here too. Decide if you would like herbs for cooking, making tea or to use for a relaxing, soothing bath.

Aloe Vera-Known as the healing herb. Rub fresh juice from the leaves onto cuts and burns and have faster healing and scarring. Great for a sunny windowsill.

Basil-Annual that likes a very warm area. Don't plant this one too early outside. Freezes well in ice cube trays. Queen of Siam adds a spicy clove-like flavor to tea.

Catnip-Not just for cats. It is also good for relief of cold symptoms and congestion made as a tea. Perennial, very invasive.

Chives- Perennial that likes it warm, dry and sunny. High in vitamin A and C. Also has folic acid, potassium, calcium and iron. Cut fresh pieces to ice cube trays to freeze. Edible flowers. Use at the end of cooking to retain most of the nutrients.

Coriander- Coriander is **Cilantro**. The seed is coriander, the leaf is cilantro (Chinese Parsley). 12-18" This herb does bolt in hot weather so you'll want to plant them in succession. Used in Thai, Indian and Mexican cooking. Has 4 times more beta-carotene than parsley and 3 times more calcium, protein, minerals, vitamin B and niacin. Biennial.

Dill-is an annual that reseeds everywhere if you don't prune the seed heads when ready. It aids in indigestion and improves the appetite. Attracts yellow and black swallowtail butterflies.

Echinacea-Purple Cone Flower strengthens the immune system. Full sun to part shade, perennial. Use flowers fresh or dried and only 2 year old roots or older.

Fennel-3-4 ft, Bronze fennel makes a nice backdrop. Full sun, hot and dry.

Feverfew-Perennial that as a tea is said to be a traditional cure-all. The ferny leaves made as a tea are also a relieve for migraines.

Lavender-Easy to grow. Some varieties are harder than others. Angustifolia "munstead" is one of them. Soothing in baths and sachets for night time rest. Pick flowers just after opening. Drink a light tea 3 times a day for headaches, insomnia, sore throat, anxiety and depression. Another basic cure-all, it's said. 18-36"

Lemon Balm- a few fresh leaves put in your afternoon tea will be very refreshing. Lemon Balm drinks a little more water so let this only slightly dry out. Makes a soothing and stimulating tea. An extra strength tea dabbed onto cold sores and acne is beneficial. Does great in poor soil. Perennial.

Lemon Thyme-is wonderful baked on fish or mixed in soft cheese spread. Perennial herb grows 6-10" and needs to be clipped every 3-4 years to prevent woodiness. There are a lot of wonderful Thymes. How about a Thyme garden?

Rosemary-is for remembrance. You can have fun pruning this herb into shapes. Tastes good on chicken and pork. Or put some fresh leaves into a cheese cloth and run it under hot water in the tub. This is a tender perennial and will have to be brought into the house in winter. It doesn't like dry air so it needs misting. A cooler room about 50-70* days and 10* cooler a night is best.

Mint-Plant in large containers right in the garden as mint is very invasive. Go to: pattysplants.com for more on "Herbs That Make A Great Cup Of Tea".

Oregano-is an easy to grow perennial. Added to a tomato sauce, yummy. Greek oregano is one of my favorites for cooking. Golden adds nice color in the garden. Puerto Rican has the most refreshing scent. All easy to dry by hanging upside down.

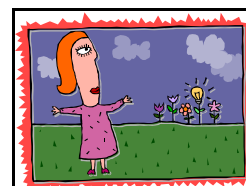
Parsley- Parsley is an after dinner breath freshener. Or add it to soups and sauces. Very high in vitamin A and C. Contains folic acid, potassium, and calcium. Use flat parsley for cooking at the last few minutes of the recipe to get the most benefits. It can tolerate moist soils but not wet soils. Biennial but usually treated as an annual.

Pineapple Sage-Excellent in tea. It smells just like pineapples and has a fruity flavor. Grows 24-36" with bright red flowers mid-to late summer.

Any remedy I may have listed are only references and not intended as medical

advice. Always talk to your doctor first.

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There's so many to choose from!

2008 Herb of the Year

***Calendula* was named Herb of the Year by the International Herb Association**

Grown for it's culinary and medicinal use. Research has also found it may suppress the growth of other plants which could be a good weed control. Keep your favorite flowers or plants 12 inches away to avoid stunting their grow.



Herbs For Certain Conditions

Light Preferences of Herbs

Prefers Partial Shade

Angelica, Bee Balm, Chervil, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Mints, Parsley

Tolerates Partial Shade

Anise hyssop, Borage
Calendula, Catnip, Chamomile,
Chives, Fennel, Marjoram, Rosemary

Savory winter & summer

Tarragon, Thyme

Prefers Full Sun

Aloe, Anise, Anise hyssops
Basil, Borage, Calendula
Caraway, Catnip, Chamomile,
Comfrey, Dill, Fennel, Feverfew,
Garlic chives, Hyssops, Lavender,
Lemon verbena, Marjoram,
Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Rue,
Sage, Santolina, Savories,
Scented Geraniums,
Southernwood, Tarragon, Thyme
and Wormwood

Tolerates Full Sun

Angelica, Bee Balm, Lemon Balm,
Lovage, Mints, Pennyroyal, Tansy,
and Valerian

Soil Moisture Preferences of Herbs

Prefers Dry Soil

Aloe, Anise, Caraway, Chamomile,
feverfew, Garlic chive, Hyssops,
Lavender, Marjoram, Oregano,
Rosemary, Rue, Sage, Santolina,
Savory- summer & winter,
Southernwood, Tarragon, Thyme,
Wormwood

Prefers Moderately Moist Soil

Anise hyssops, Borage, Chives, dill,
Fennel, Lemon verbena, Tansy

Prefers Moist Soil

Angelica, Basil, Bee balm, Calendula,
Catnip, Chervil, Cilantro, Comfrey,
Lemongrass, Lovage, Mints,
Parsley, Pennyroyal, Scented Geraniums, Valerian



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Pruning & Harvesting Herbs

Prune in spring to tidy up and shape your herbs. Any time you want to use your herbs prune them slightly. Harvest herbs in the morning just after the dew has dried. This is when they have the most flavor. The more you prune and use your herbs the thicker and fuller they will be. You can make 2 or 3 harvests during the growing season. In the fall, prune perennial herbs 6-8 inches or to last years growth as long as there's still some growth or shoots below this level. If you don't have time to dry and hang your herbs, use the cuttings on the grill or fire pit. It will add flavor to your cooking, plus it's great aromatherapy.

Drying, Freezing & Storing Herbs

Drying herbs is one of the easiest ways to save your herbs. Make small bundles and take off the bottom leaves. Tie twine around the stems or I find using a rubber band is easier to use. Hang the bundles in a warm dry area and check them frequently to make sure they are drying out properly. You can also microwave them. Take a few stems and place on a paper towel. Cover with another paper towel. Put on high for 1 minute. Check to see how they are drying for 30 seconds more until they are dry. For herbs with seeds, like dill or fennel put them upside down in a paper bags to dry. Cut holes in the sides of the bags for ventilation. Some herbs don't dry well, so freezing would

be better for them. Basil and chives freeze very well. Cut them in small pieces and put them in ice cube trays. Once frozen take out and put into freezer bags. To store dried herbs use tight fitting glass containers. Place in a dark area. I use blue & clear canning jars to store mine.



For a list of homemade natural insecticides and fungicides, go to www.pattysplants.com
or
e-mail: patty@pattysplants.com
for any questions.

February's Newsletter

Growing vegetables, companion planting and simple organic home gardening.