

August 2008

Summer is in Full
Swing

Patty's Plants

August Newsletter



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Carpet Fresher with Dried Lavender

- Mix 1/2 cup dried lavender with 1 cup baking soda. Sprinkle onto your carpet, wait a 1/2 hour, then vacuum. You really can use any herb of your choosing or even mix a few of your favorites together. Your house will smell soooo fresh.

Harvesting, Preserving, Recipes and more

Summer is in full swing and our gardens will be producing those delectable homegrown herbs and vegetables. Is there anything better than a tomato and basil salad grown right in your own backyard? For those of you who are unable to have your own backyard garden, how about a container filled with tomatoes, peppers and your favorite herbs sitting on your porch or balcony. Here at Patty's Plants we have ready to go organic veggie and herbs gardens. Later this month I hope to have a tomato taste testing day right here at my shop. I will let all of you know. In this newsletter I will have info on har-



vesting, drying, freezing and storing herbs. I will also have a few recipes on preserving all those yummy tomatoes to add to sauces, stews and salsas. I have some wonderful recipes for ground cherry pie, ground cherry & peach jam provided by one of my cus-

tomers. "Thank You", Karen Huebner. Oh, I'm getting hungry just thinking about all of this.

The herb Stevia is great added to deserts, coffee and teas. This herb is featured in this newsletter.

It's a non-calorie sugar substitute you can grow and dry yourself.

Happy Gardening and enjoy this newsletter. Patty

Start Pruning Herbs Now To Enjoy This Winter

If you would like to store some of your herbs to have this winter for adding to homemade soups or stews, this is the time to start pruning them and storing them. Hopefully all summer, any time you wanted to use your herbs you pruned them slightly. This would have made them nice and full for harvesting now. Harvest herbs in the morning just after the dew has dried. This is

when they have the most flavor. Prune most herbs just before flowering. 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.

4 Ways to Preserve Fresh Herbs



Air-Drying—Drying herbs like this is one of the easiest ways to save your herbs. Make small bundles and take off the bottom leaves. Tie twine around the stems. I find using a rubber bands or twist ties is easier to use. Hang the bundles in a warm dry area and check them frequently to make sure they are drying out properly. The ideal temperature for drying them is between 68-90 degrees. The area should be well ventilated and dry. To keep dust off the herbs while drying, put each bundle upside down in a paper bag. Cut some holes in the sides of the bag for ventilation, then hang. The smaller the bundle the faster they will dry and less chance of them getting black and moldy. Using the bag method works especially well for herbs with seeds, like dill or fennel, their seeds will fall right into the bag, nothing will be lost. Air-Drying can take 1-2 weeks.

Microwave Drying—Put a few stems of small leaf herbs (Thyme) or pull the leaves off herbs that have larger leaves (Sage) and lay flat on a sheet of paper towel. Cover with another paper towel. Put on high for 1 minute. Check to see how they are drying then for 30 seconds more until they are dry. Use caution when drying herbs in the microwave, they can start on fire if over dried. I've been there, smells good but not a pretty site. They also must be cooled thoroughly before they are stored.

Oven Drying

When you use the oven keep the oven door propped open slightly for ventilation and to control the heat. Place clean, fresh leaves in a single layer on racks. There should be at least 1 inches around the racks and between them so that the air can circulate freely. Check often. Set the oven on the very lowest setting and dry the herbs slowly.

Drying will be complete in 2 to 4 hours.

Freezing—Some herbs don't dry well, so freezing would be better for them. Basil and chives freeze very well. Tear them in small pieces and put them in ice cube trays. Once frozen take out and put into freezer bags. Buy ice trays just for freezing herbs, they will get very stained. You can also spread herbs on a tray or cookie sheet and place in the freezer. When frozen solid, pack into airtight containers. I lay my basil leaves flat in a freezer bag. Then when I need some for cooking I crush a leaf and add it to my sauce. Frozen herbs will not be good as a garnish. You'll have to grow some in a south window here in the winter for that.

Air-Drying herbs is one of the easiest ways to save them for winter use.

Storing Dried Herbs

To store dried herbs use tight fitting glass containers. Tight lids will prevent moisture, mold and bacteria from ruining the herbs. Plastic containers are not recommended because they can give the herbs a

“plastic-y” smell. Make sure the containers you do use are clean and dry. Place in an area away from sunlight. I use blue & clear canning jars to store mine. I put my herbs in whole without crushing them. I believe

it holds the flavor in better that way. I crush them just before I'm ready to use them. I do carry a few old blue canning jars here at Patty's Plants.

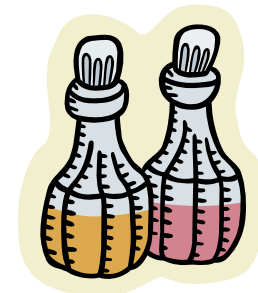


Blue Canning Jars are perfect for storing dried herbs.

Preserving Herbs in Vinegar.

Preserving herbs in vinegars is really very simple. Use clean sterilized bottles. Do not use bottles with metal tops, there can be a reaction with the vinegar. Tight fitting cork stoppers work well with recycled glass bottles. Use herbs of your choice, Tarragon, Rosemary, Basil are just a few tasty ones to use. Choose wine, white or cider vinegar depending on whether you are making it for a dressing or a marinade. Wine or white vinegar is better for marinades and cider is better for salad dressings. Pack the herbs in the

bottles then warm the vinegar, and pour over the herbs. Close and put in a sunny window sill for 2-4 weeks. Shake the bottle every day. When the steeping time is over use a cheese cloth and strain the liquid into a fresh bottle. You may add a few fresh sprigs for identifying the type of vinegar you just made. Plus it makes it look pretty, especially if you would like to give it as a gift. Tie a little ribbon or raffia around it with a tag for uses to give as a nice hostess gift.



Use Herbal Vinegars in salad dressings, marinades and sauces.

Patty's Hot & Spicy Salsa Recipe

Yup, that's me canning salsa. My Husband and son love it hot. I have to wear a mask because the hot peppers make me choke. So I make this out of love for them. My son can eat one jar full with chips, in one sitting. Ouch! Here's one of my recipes, this is my canning recipe but you could cut everything up and eat it fresh:

12 cups peeled, chopped tomatoes

12 cups seeded, a combo of chopped hot peppers,

(habanero, jalapenos, red chili) I add a few sweet peppers too.

4 cups chopped onion

24 garlic clove sections, minced

8 Tbsp minced cilantro or sometimes I use the leaves of celery, chopped or both

8 tsp oregano

6 tsp salt

1/2 tsp cumin

3 cups cider vinegar

Lime juice optional

Combine all ingredients in a heavy saucepan.



The hotter the better my family says.

Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent burning. Pour into clean sterilized canning jars leaving a 1/4" head space. Process 15 minutes in boiling bath canner.

Note: It is safe to change to ratio of hot to mild peppers just do not add more than the 12 cups. The amount of onion may be decreased but not increased. The amount of vinegar **CAN NOT** be decreased. The salt is optional. It is safe to add dry spices like cayenne pepper, dried cilantro or hot pepper flakes. Makes 6 to 8 pint jars.

- This recipe has been tested and used many times. It comes from the Ball Corp. blue book. I changed the types of peppers. Still you must be careful if it's not done right it could be a safety hazard. You can also freeze this recipe if you don't want to can it.
- For easy peeling on tomatoes. Heat water to a boil, throw in the tomatoes. When they start to crack (only a few seconds) remove and put in ice cold water, then peel.
- Don't forget to label jars.



Tips- I use less habanero than jalapeno peppers. I also add the juice of one lime. Then if I want a thicker salsa, when canning I add a small can of tomato paste. Or you can make your own paste and add it. That takes too long for me and I've got to get the mask off! Remember to always wear gloves when working with hot peppers. If you should happen to rub your eyes, cut a couple of cucumber slices and put on your eyes, it takes the burn out or flush with water. Seek medical help if you can't get relief. This recipe can be cut in half or less.

Easy to grow- Ground Cherries & Tomatillos

Tomatillos (*Physalis ix- arpa*) and ground cher- ries (*Physalis pruinosa*) grow very similar to to- matoes, but grow more quickly than tomatoes. Both grow in a casing or a husk and can reseed themselves. Ground cherries grow low to the ground hence their name and tomatillos are much more upright. You can even use a tomato cage with tomatillos. Ground cherries ripen from green to yellow-gold. To- matillos ripen from green to yellow-green to

pale yellow. Tomatillos are used in a lot of salsa recipes where ground cherries are used in making pies and jams. Ground cherries will store in their husks for 1-2 month in the frig. Without their husks only a couple of weeks. **Harvest Tips:** Harvest tomatillos and ground cherries when they are fully mature using a garden scissor so you don't damage the plant. Unripe fruit have a sticky surface. Ground cherries may fall to the

ground when they are ripe. Pick both of them as they mature to en- courage new fruit to form.

How to prepare and use: Ground cherries are eaten right from the plant, or are used in des- serts, sauces, preserves, fruit toppings, pies and salads. Tomatillos are usually cooked. It brings out the flavor more: sim- mer for 5 to 10 minutes in a pot of water; you can use them in chili rel- lenos, salsa verde, gua- camole, sauces or dips.



Ground Cherries



Tomatillos

We still have a few left growing in containers.

Recipe for Ground Cherry Pie Submitted by Karen Huebner

Recipe by Irene Hill

Line a 9" pie pan with a single pie crust
 Cover crust with 2 cups of ground cherries; husked, washed and dried.
 Beat together:
 2 large eggs
 1/8 tsp. salt
 2/3 cup granulated sugar
 1 Tbsp. flour
 Then add and blend together:
 1 cup whole milk (must be whole milk or the custard won't work)
 1 tsp vanilla

Pour custard mixture over ground cherries
 Bake 10 minutes at 425 degrees.
 Reduce heat to 350* and bake 25-30 minutes more.
 Cool before serving.
 Enjoy!



Ground Cherry and Peach Jam Submitted by Karen Huebner

Recipe by Irene Hill

3 cups chopped peaches
 3 cups ground cherries, cut in half
 2 Tbsp. Lemon juice
 1 package Sure-Jell

Stir all ingredients together and bring to a boil.
 Add all at once 4-1/2 cups granulated sugar.
 Bring to a full rolling boil and continue to boil for 1 minute.
 Stir and skim for 7 minutes.
 Place in jars and seal.

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Patty's Plants

Natural & Organic Garden Supply

St. Gabriel Organics' Milky Spore is a naturally occurring host specific bacterium (*Bacillus popilliae*-Dutky). This product is lethal to a familiar destructive summer-time pest. It targets and discriminately works to attack the white grubs of **Japanese Beetles.**



MILKY SPORE puts in place an on-guard protective blanket on your lawn.

Spores in treated turf are swallowed by grubs during their normal pattern of feeding; this starts the demise of healthy grubs. Milky Spore disease then begins to cripple the grub, and within the next 7-21 days will eventually die. As the grub decomposes, it releases billions of new spores

Milky spore can even be put in your veggie or flower garden. It is non toxic and pet friendly. Milky Spore does not affect pets, beneficial insects, fish, bees, birds, other animals, plants, or man. It is not a poison.

From: St. Gabriel Organics

You can find out more about this at Patty's Plants.

Stevia– The Natural Sugar Substitute

Stevia is a natural sweetener which is non-glycemic and non-caloric but is 10 times sweeter than sugar. Just biting into a leaf is like tasting a sugar cube! This plant will grow to about 1-2' high and wide. It is an annual. Keep flowers pruned off.

Tips for Growing Stevia:

1. Plant outside after all danger of frost.
2. Place in six to eight hours of sun.
3. Mulch with compost or bark up to three inches deep and two feet in diameter. Make sure to leave an open collar about two inches wide around the small plant at first.
4. Keep plants well watered.
5. Harvest small amounts often or cut bush to about two inches above the ground in early summer and again in late summer/early fall just before flowering.
6. In cold areas, bring plants in and place under 14 hours of fluorescent lighting hung three inches above the plants or treat as an annual.

Tips for Using Fresh Stevia:

1. Add several leaves to any cup of hot liquid.

Approximately 3 tablespoons chopped fresh Stevia equals one cup of Sugar or 1 teaspoon processed Stevia extract powder.

2. Make a fresh whole leaf extract: Bring water to a boil and turn off. Pack tea ball with leaves.

Steep leaves in water for 30 minutes.

Add this liquid to foods where the green appearance would be unwelcome.

Tips for Using Dried Stevia:

1. Dry in a warm dark dry area.

2. Grind dried leaves to a fine powder with a small coffee/spice grinder.

3. Store in an airtight container out of light.

4. Approximately 1 tablespoon of dried Stevia powder equals one cup of sugar or 1 teaspoon processed Stevia extract powder.



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