

# Home & Garden

## Herbs are perfect for children who want to help in the garden

Herbs are a great way to spice up your annual flower beds and at the same time add a little zing to your cooking this summer.

They also can serve as a wonderful lesson for children who want to help in the garden.

Before you begin, check out a book on culinary herbs from the local library and teach your students while they're playing in the dirt.

Take out a ruler and let them measure where to place the herbs in the garden. Care for your plants together, pick your rewards and cook a family meal using basil and oregano from your garden.

### How to Begin

For herb transplants, The Home Depot gardening expert John Mansz recommends you dig a hole two times the size of the root ball for each plant.

If the soil is compact, add a good well-balanced soil conditioner to loosen the dirt and improve drainage.

Explain to the children how to gently squeeze the tray to remove the transplants and to carefully squeeze the roots to loosen them.

After they're planted, fertilize once with composted manure, explaining that organic matter is natural - it comes from plants and animals. Herbs won't need more than one fertilization in the summer because they are light feeders and require little maintenance.

Explain that plants need three important nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Nitrogen is what makes the plant green and helps it grow. Phosphorous is for strong roots. Potassium works to resist disease and strengthen the plant.

It will be necessary to mulch, thin and weed from time to time.

"Show them how to deadhead the flowers by removing the dead blossoms from the plant," said Mansz. "Tell them that it tricks the plants into producing more flowers."

He recommends the following herbs, adding that they require moist soil, high in organic matter and partial shade in summer, full sun

in fall and winter.

✓ Chives need a dormant period to send out leaves in the spring.

It has a sweet, mild onion taste and blends well with onions, potatoes, artichokes, asparagus, cauliflower, corn, tomatoes, peas, carrots, spinach, poultry, fish, veal, creamy sauces, cheeses and eggs.

✓ Dill should be protected from wind because of its feathery foliage.

It has beautiful clusters of yellow flowers and flavourful leaves and grows to about three feet in height. Its sharp, slightly bitter taste makes it an excellent addition to fish, pork, poultry and just about any vegetable.

✓ Oregano should be pinched back to promote bushy leaves. It has a hot, peppery flavour and enhances cheese and egg dishes and blends well with marinated vegetables, roasted bell peppers, mushrooms, beef, poultry, black beans, zucchini and potatoes.

✓ Parsley has been used by chefs for years to spice up foods and add green to platters, and can serve as an excellent boarder for your garden. Its unique flavour blends well with other foods, except sweets and can be added at the last moment of cooking in sauces, grilled meats and poultry. It also is the prime ingredient of salsa verde.

✓ Mint is a hardy and fast-growing perennial. It has a strong peppermint flavour and scent and can be used in moderation to flavour teas, jelly, desserts, ice cream, chocolate and cheese cake.

✓ Rosemary is slow-growing but is very hardy and will come back year after year. It has a mint-like, sweet and slight ginger flavour and is great with just about anything. It also combines well with herbs like chives, thyme and parsley.

✓ Sage also is hardy and will return every year. Its fresh leaves are used in salads, omelets, soups and breads, rolls, sausages and poultry stuffings. It cooks well with most meats and vegetables.

✓ Thyme has a faint clover flavour works well in stews and blends with most meats, poultry, fish and vegetables.

### Herbed Popcorn

For eight to 10 cups of hot popcorn, melt half cup diet margarine seasoned with one teaspoon of oregano and parsley and half a teaspoon each of basil, garlic powder and onion powder.

Let blend before stirring into hot popcorn. One cup of buttered popcorn has 40 calories and one cup of this recipe has 32 calories. One cup of unbuttered popcorn has 25 calories.



Herbs are perfect for children gardeners because they require little maintenance.

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