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Herbs – Fresh, Delicious, and Easy

Every spring, my backyard garden gets tilled and seeds get planted. With some time and effort, the seeds turn into delicious vegetables. Now, there is no effort by me – my husband has the green thumb of the family. On the other hand, I have a “black” thumb. No matter my efforts, I struggle with keeping plants alive. If you are like me, there is hope. Keep reading for some sage advice!

In spite of my failing as a plant parent, there are some that actually grow for me. These include herbs like rosemary, thyme, sage, oregano, mint, cilantro, and basil. With a container, potting soil, sunshine, and water, you can have fresh herbs in no thyme.

Once you have planted some herbs in a container, you may wonder where to put them. Ideally, the container will go outside on a front step, deck, or patio, to soak up sunshine. If that is not an

option, or it is winter, find the sunniest spot in your house. In our area, that will usually be a south-facing window.

Whether you grow your herbs inside or outside, they will need watered. But when? And how much? A good rule of thumb is water them when the top inch of soil is dry (this is literally a rule of thumb, the tip of your thumb to the first knuckle is about an inch). Water until it drains out the bottom – do this in a sink or bathtub if you are indoors so you don't water the floor in the process.

The best part of an herb garden, to me at least, is grabbing a pinch or two of fresh herbs while I am cooking to give a little boost to the meal. Most herb plants will be fine if you take a few leaves off at a time, just don't take too much. Drying herbs for long-term storage is another way to use them. According to the Kansas Garden Guide (available on the [Wildcat District website](#)):

“After harvesting, hang herbs in loosely tied bundles in a well-ventilated room. You can also spread the branches on a screen, cheese-cloth, or hardware cloth. For herbs where leaves only are needed, the leaves can be spread on flat trays. Keep dust off the herbs with a cloth or similar protective cover that allows moisture to pass through. It is generally best to dry naturally in a cool, dark room rather than to use artificial heat.”

Add your harvested herbs to anything that sounds good. Chicken is enhanced with the addition of rosemary, thyme, or sage. Italian foods call for oregano and basil, while Mexican food is a good use for cilantro and oregano. Honestly, the possibilities are endless – just try new things to see what you like or don't like.

Herbs are inexpensive, easy additions to a meal that take it to the next level. Bonus: they don't add any sodium, sugar, or fat. Think of your favorite culinary herb, and then get some soil, a pot, and some seeds so that you can have it fresh whenever you want!

For more information, please contact Lacy O'Malley, lacyo@ksu.edu, or by calling 620-308-2970.

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