

The Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partnership (CNAP) is a collaboration of the many nutrition assistance program providers within the County, working towards a common goal of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of program participants. Stanislaus County CNAP was established in June 2006. Partners include providers of the SNAP (Food Stamp) Program, the WIC Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program, the Elderly Nutrition Program, and the SNAP ED and EFNEP Programs.

My Garden

The Series

Herbs



My Garden

Herbs

Also, look for:

Let's Get Started

Spring Veggies

Fall Veggies

Berries & Fruit

Harvest & Storage

Cooking

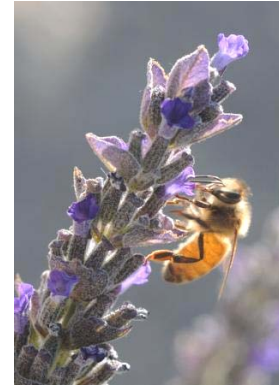
Bugs in Your Garden

Gardening with Kids



An informational guide provided by the
Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partners

A Superb Blurb About The Herb



Growing your own herbs is fun and easy. Herbs can be used fresh or dried to add flavor to your favorite dishes.

How Do I Get Started?

Before you plant your garden, decide which herbs you will need. Look at some of your recipes. Which herbs do you use the most? If you make spaghetti, you should plant oregano. For Mexican and Asian dishes, you will need cilantro. For Indian food, coriander is important.

Once you've chosen your herbs, create a space for them in your garden. Herbs need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight every day. Herbs will not grow well inside your house.

Can I Grow Herbs in Containers?

Yes, herbs can do well in containers. However, the bottom of the container must have holes. If you buy a container from a store, ask an employee to drill the holes for you. Otherwise, make three to four 1/4" holes in the bottom of the container.

Some herbs, such as mint and lemon verbena, should always be grown in containers. This is because they have underground stems that grow quickly. They can easily take over a garden patch and are difficult to eradicate.

Herbs planted in containers in direct sun can dry out quickly. This is why it is important to keep them well-watered. When you water, you should notice water coming out of the bottom of the container. Test the container soil with your finger every day in hot weather to check if it is

dry. Water only when soil feels dry. Plants need both water and air in the soil so their roots can grow. This is why you do not want to keep soil in the container wet all the time.

The Herb Life Cycle

Some plants live for only 6 months to one year. These plants are called annuals, and include some herbs. You will need to replant them in your garden every year. Sometimes they will grow back on their own from seed, but not always. The Mini Herb guide in this publication will tell you more about each plant.

Perennials are plants that live for several years. There are many perennial herbs. These plants should be replaced after 4-5 years when they begin to look bad.

During the winter, perennials "die back" and look dead, but they are actually resting. The plant will begin to grow again in spring. Wait until then to prune. If the plant does not grow back, you will need to replace it.

When Should I Start?

Plant both annual and perennial herbs from seed in spring. Or get them at a local nursery or garden center in spring, fall or summer and plant them.



Did You Know?

EBT card holders may use their Food Stamp benefits to purchase seeds and plants to grow food for their personal consumption

Why Did my Herbs Die?

Sometimes a retail store sells herbs like basil or cilantro during fall or early winter. These herbs have been growing since spring and will die when cold weather arrives. Unfortunately, many gardeners do not realize this and believe they caused the plant to die.

How Should I Water my Herbs?

Herbs in your garden soil should be watered deeply. Water the entire root system, which may be as deep as 18 inches for perennials. For shallow-rooted annuals like basil, wet the soil 4-6 inches deep.

Harvesting & Drying Herbs



The leafy part of an herb should be picked before the plant begins to set flowers. Pick herbs in the morning just after the dew has dried.





Cut herbs, gather into




bundles and tie with string. Hang bundles upside down and tie a paper bag over them. Wait 2 weeks for most herbs to dry. Store the finished herbs in containers away from heat and sunlight.





Store dried herbs in a cool, dry place away from your stove. Glass containers work well for storage, but keep them in cupboards because sunlight will fade both color and flavor of the herbs. When you want to use a dried herb, grind it with a mortar and pestle or a coffee grinder just before use. Dried herbs can be kept for 6-8 months.

Mini Herb Guide: Plant, Harvest and Cook Great Tasting Food

Plant herbs in full sun in spring unless otherwise directed.

| Name | Growing & Cooking Tips |
|--|---|
|  Basil | Can be dried or frozen. Great for making pesto. Also an important ingredient in pho. Annual. |
|  Chamomile | Not all chamomile is the same. Check that the label is <i>Matricaria recutita</i> . Dry and use in a tea ball to make tea. Annual. |
|  Chives | Can take partial shade. Use fresh stems in soups, salads or omelets for onion-like flavor. Perennial. |
|  Cilantro & Coriander | Can take partial shade. Harvest young leaves and use fresh in salads, salsa, pho and other dishes. Annual. Coriander is the seed from the cilantro plant! After flowers bloom, seed heads form. Allow seed heads to ripen, then harvest and place in a paper bag. Seeds are ready after pods open within about 10 days. Annual. |

| Name | Growing & Cooking Tips |
|--|--|
|  Dill | Seeds from this plant may sprout all over your garden. Pull out baby plants as they appear. Use this herb to make pickles or flavor pasta salad. Annual. |
|  Lemon Balm | This plant can be invasive, keep it in a pot. Needs to be planted in partial shade. Use fresh baby leaves in iced tea or salad. Perennial. |
|  Mint | This plant can be invasive, keep it contained in a pot. Mint sprigs are great in soups, salads and tea. Perennial. |
|  Oregano | Do not overwater. Use in spaghetti and pizza sauces. Perennial. |

| Name | Growing & Cooking Tips |
|--|---|
|  Parsley | Can grow in partial shade. Flat leaf type is used in cooking. Curly leaf is used for decoration. Annual. |
|  Rosemary | Water regularly for one year, then infrequently. Use to flavor meat and vegetables. Plant has pretty purple, white or pink flowers spring and summer. Perennial. |
|  Sage | Water regularly for one year, then infrequently. Combine with thyme to flavor beans. Use in stuffing or to flavor meat or vegetables. Plant has attractive purple flowers in spring. Perennial. |
|  Thyme | Can grow in partial shade. Great for flavoring seafood and fish. Plant has pretty white or purple flowers. Perennial. |



Chamomile or Mint Tea

Using Dried Herbs

Multiply the number of cups your pot will hold by 1. If your pot holds 4 cups, you would use 4 tablespoons of dried herb.

Hot Tea

Pour boiling water into a teapot and leave for 5 minutes. Keep teapot covered to retain heat.

Strain herbs once tea has reached desired strength.

Ice Tea

Use 3 tablespoons of fresh herbs or 2 tablespoons of dried herbs per cup.

A Note of Caution

If you are pregnant or nursing, do not drink herbs as a tea without first consulting your doctor.

Drying Herbs



Herbaceous Quiche

Ingredients

Olive oil spray
1 cup finely chopped onions
1 1/4 c cheddar cheese grated
3 eggs
1 1/2 c fat free milk
1 c finely chopped sun-dried tomatoes
1 1/2 tsp tarragon
1 1/2 tsp thyme

Directions

Heat oven to 350°
Spray muffin tins and skillet. Chop onions and sauté in skillet until golden. Add to bottom of tins. Top with cheddar cheese. Whisk together eggs, milk, sundried tomatoes and herbs. Spoon mixture into muffin tins.

Bake for 30 minutes.

Recipe developed by UCCE Stanislaus County