

# ANYONE CAN PLANT AN HERB GARDEN

MAY 14, 2020

There is nothing better than harvesting something and eating it right away. Herbs are our flavour makers, they bring joy to our food and fill our hearts with the flavour of home. In this activity we share some tips for a mini herb garden, especially geared toward young people and what we know they love. If you have never really grown anything before, pick one plant you like to use in the kitchen, and try growing it.

## OUR TOP PICKS – MINT & CHIVES



If you are tight on space or have a pretty shady spot, you can still grow these two herbs that give a lot for very little in return. Chives are my top pick because of the purple pompom flowers they produce in spring and because I love eating them in my [frittatas](#) all summer long.

Did you know mint comes in all kinds of flavours? Try a few! Chocolate mint with purplish stems, apple mint with big fuzzy leaves, mojito mint which is great for minty limeade, spearmint might remind you of brushing teeth and peppermint, a tried and true delight. Growing mint in a pot is really the best policy because they will take over without walls to keep them in check. Even a small 6 inch pot will work for either of these.

## ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

### EQUIPMENT

- Container of your choice, minimum 20 cm deep and 15 cm wide, with drainage holes on the bottom
- Quality potting soil & compost mix (2:1)
- Seedlings
- Watering can or hose with nozzle
- Trowel or use your hands

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### STEP 1: PLAN YOUR GARDEN (& TALK ABOUT IT WITH YOUR PARENTS TOO)



Plant your herb garden in a way that makes sense for you, your space and your culinary palate. May 21 is the traditional garden planting weekend but anytime before June 15 will work.

- Where will you put your herb garden? On a windowsill, or maybe a balcony?
- How many herbs do you have to plant? What is your budget, in terms of space as well as cost? How many pots will you need?
- What is your watering plan? (make it easy on yourself for the higher demands in summer)
- Check the light in the space you are planning every two hours throughout the day. Most things need a minimum of 6 hours a day.

## STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR PLANTS



Pick which herbs you would like to grow based on the ones you like to eat. In general, herbs are fairly easy to grow and there are so many flavours to experiment with. Some are a bit more temperamental, for example:

- **Cilantro:** often goes to seed too early
- **Lemon Verbena:** tender perennial for overwintering indoors
- **Ginger:** likes a greenhouse type environment

These varieties might be worth the challenge though for your green thumbs. **A word about buying plants at the nursery:** Choose a smaller size plant (which often will be less root bound and will transplant easier) and look for deeply coloured leaves without spots or yellowing. Sometimes plants flower when stressed so choose plants that are not budding out.

## STEP 3: FIND OR MAKE YOUR CONTAINERS

In terms of pots, you can use almost anything. People have planted herbs into old tea pots, dresser drawers, even old kitchen sinks, as long as it has drainage holes on the bottom. You can often find discarded black, plastic landscaping pots in laneways for free. Growing vertically can help make the most of small spaces, planters with tiers or the felted planting pockets that hang. *Remember in smaller pots, you need to water and fertilize more frequently.*

However, remember to give your plants enough space. The difference between the two basil plants pictured below is SPACING. The plants shown here, grew 5 times bigger in 2 weeks when planted with more space. Different plants have different needs but generally, herbs like about 30cm of soil beneath it.



## STEP 4: PLANTING

Transplant your seedlings into the new pots. Fill your container  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with damp potting mix, open a hole about the size of your seedling pot, squeeze the bottom of the seedling pot to push the whole root block out and then when the transplant is in place, pat the soil down a bit. You want your transplant to be deep enough that the soil level of the root block and the pot are even—not too deep that the soil level is higher on the stem or leaves though.



## STEP 5: WATER

Always water new transplants, give them a good soak. Then leave your plant in a shady spot for a few days until it adjusts.

# HAPPY GROWING!