

An NKHS How-To Guide

Raising herbs



Herbs feed the palate and the soul. They add color and contrast to landscape, perfume our home, heal our wounds, and tantalize our taste buds. They are easy to grow. Whether in the garden or on the window sill, learn their likes and dislikes and you'll be rewarded with flavor and beauty.

Culture: Herbs grow best in well-drained fertile soils. So a garden bed that is well prepared with plenty of organic matter will increase your chances of success. After seeding or transplanting, keep the soil moist and well weeded. Use monthly feeding of a complete fertilizer. (Many gardeners like *Miracle Gro* for watering seed beds.)

Starting Herbs from Seed: Start seed indoors 5-8 weeks prior to transplanting into the garden. Hardy seedlings can be transplanted after the last frost and tender types after June 1. Follow these guidelines for the best chance of success.

1. Good sanitation practices are the key to good germination and growth. Use a sterilized growing medium and clean containers.
2. After you have sowed the seeds, water them and cover the container with plastic or clear dome lid. Seed catalogs offer kits for this. Remove the covers once the seeds have sprouted.
3. You must provide the proper warmth for germination. Never let the soil go above 80 degrees or below 60 degrees.
4. Be sure you have good lighting for proper growth of seedlings.
5. Transplant seedlings when the second set of leaves appear. Don't let them become leggy or root bound.
6. Harden off seedlings by setting them outside for short times during the day.

Germination codes: Check seed packets for germination requirements.

1. Germinate at room temperatures between 60 to 70 degrees.
2. Larger seeds need to be covered with soil at least as thick as the seed.
3. Some seeds germinate slower than others. Check the seed packet for germination times for your particular herbs.

Harvest: For fresh use, harvest as needed. For preserving, harvest at peak maturity. For distilling, harvest when blooms are just beginning to appear (This is the point when the leaves contain their highest level of essential oils.).

Preserving: Drying is the most common way to preserve herbs. Hang small bunches from the ceiling in a dry dark location for about two weeks. Alternatively, place the herbs in brown paper bags and leave them to dry.

Visit the Northern Kentucky Herb Society website at: www.nkyherb.com