

The Kitchen Garden

For many, the idea of growing our own herbs seems like an expensive and difficult task that should be left to the accomplished gardener. Founder of 'Gardini' and gardening expert, Karen Jackson, begs to differ! Here she shows us the path to container herb growing, that will result in your very own herb garden, that has both culinary and decorative benefits.



Herbs are for everyone. Buy O'Hanlons fresh herbs in your local Superquinn for only €1.39 and have your very own herb garden whether you live in an apartment or house.

Herbs are container friendly and most will grow with relative ease and a little love. To love a herb all you have to do is water it – as low maintenance as you can get!

I have selected a few easy-to-grow and easy-to-use herbs. Buy them fresh and ask your friends around for a light lunch or roast dinner, show off your organic herb garden with these very easy recipes. Don't forget to continually point out how all the herbs were grown by your very own organic hands! Then sit back, sip your Pimms and beam with pride while gazing at your newly-found green fingers.

Basil

Basil is one of the most widely used herbs in the world and is synonymous with Mediterranean cooking. Basil is the ultimate compliment to tomatoes, and also pairs beautifully with onions, garlic and olives.

Uses

Its warm, spicy flavour enhances the taste of soups, casseroles and pastas, and even when used as a torn leaf tossed into a fresh salad, basil adds extra bite. Basil should be added at the end of the cooking process as prolonged heat will cause its volatile oils to dissipate.

Growing basil

Basil will only last a summer. It will grow very quickly especially in sunlight, inside or outside. Basil needs direct sunlight and plenty of water.

Chives

With its mild onion flavour, fresh, bright green colour and leafy shape, this well known member of the onion family needs little introduction.

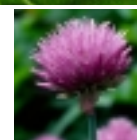
Uses

Chives should be used fresh otherwise they lose almost all of their flavour. When used with cooked foods, add them after cooking. Chives can



Gardening tips

- > Most herbs can be planted in one large pot, but this is not recommended for rosemary or mint.
- > If your basil looks wilted – don't fret, a good watering can bring it back to life.
- > In very hot summer days, make sure you water daily, you can leave a few millimetres of water in the tray with the pebbles for moisture, but do not soak the bottom of the pots in water.
- > When cutting your fresh herbs for culinary use, always cut in the morning so that they retain most of their oils.
- > Place all herb containers in sunny, sheltered positions.
- > WATER, WATER, WATER – don't allow your pots to dry out.



SG recommend
Our potted chive plants are very popular and are perfect for growing on a kitchen window sill.

be used to add flavour to a huge range of food, probably best known for adding to baked potatoes with butter.

Growing chives

Chives can grow all year round outside, once in a sunny sheltered position. But I would recommend that you bring them inside in winter, where you can keep a better eye on them and move them around into sunny areas.

baked potatoes with brie & chives

Ingredients

- 4 large pre-baked potatoes
- 2oz brie cheese, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter or margarine
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon minced chives
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 ground black pepper
- pinch of ground nutmeg to taste

Method

Preheat oven to 190C. Slice a 1/2 inch lengthways off each baked potato. Scoop out the insides, leaving a 1/4 inch thick shell. Mash the potato flesh until smooth. Add the brie, butter, egg yolk, chives, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Stuff each potato shell with the mixture and transfer to a shallow baking dish. Bake the potatoes for approx. 12 - 15 minutes until the cheese has melted and the stuffing is heated through. Put under the grill five inches from the flame for 3 - 5 minutes until lightly browned.

Mint

There are many types of mint, each looking and tasting slightly different. Mint has savoury and sweet uses.

Uses

One of mint's special qualities is that it helps digestion, while giving a sense of well-being and relaxation. Mint sauce for lamb is made in less than a minute by putting a dessertspoon of dried mint into a small jug with sugar, vinegar and hot water. Stir and let settle.

Growing mint

Mint can grow wild and plentiful so make sure the container is small enough to restrict its growth if required. Sunlight is required for your mint to thrive.



SQ recommend

We grow mint hydroponically so the crop has a constant source of water and nutrients to provide continuous fresh growth over the season.



tomatoes with basil & balsamic vinaigrette

Ingredients

2 lbs sliced plum tomatoes
2 garlic cloves (minced)
bunch of fresh basil (chopped)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
salt and freshly ground pepper

Method

Slice the tomatoes and arrange on a plate. Mix the garlic, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and basil and pour mixture over tomatoes. Season with salt & pepper. Allow to marinate for at least 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature.

How to grow herbs in a container

- > Herbs bought in the supermarket will need to be replanted.
- > Make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom of all containers you buy.
- > Mix a small handful of slow release fertiliser capsules with your potting compost (a John Innes mix is best).
- > Place a few pebbles/broken crockery around the drainage holes to prevent the soil clogging them.
- > Gently place the compost into the container to start.
- > Compress down, not too hard, allowing the soil to breathe.
- > Take your herb out of the plastic container and shake a little to allow the roots out of the compressed rectangle shape.
- > Place the herb into the container, fill between your new herb and the sides of the container with the compost and cover completely.
- > Ideally, place the pot on a layer of pebbles on a tray. You can use a long window-box tray for this and fit a few pots along it.

For more recipes or herb advice visit www.gardini.ie

pimms – currarevagh house hotel style

Ingredients

1 part pimms
2/3 red lemonade
apples, oranges, strawberries & cucumber (measurements at your discretion)
handful of fresh mint leaves
lots of ice

Method

Soak the fruit in the pimms for 30 minutes. Then add the red lemonade, mint and ice. Serve in tall glasses whilst enjoying a game of croquet!

SQ recommend

All our herbs are harvested and packed on the same day and delivered fresh to Superquinn. A full range of fresh herbs is available in Superquinn stores all year-round.