

# HOUSING The Portland Observer

## How to dry herbs from the garden

If you haven't already gathered and dried some herbs from the garden, now's the time.

According to Nellie Oehler, home economist with the Oregon State University Extension Service, drying herbs is very easy. All you need is a paper bag, a dehydrator or a microwave oven.

Most herbs can be dried in the open air in a paper bag in a well ventilated area, said Oehler. Select fresh herbs, still green and tender. Lightly rinse herbs before drying.

The new leaves at the plant's tip are usually the most flavorful. Some herbs get a bitter taste after they flower and lose a lot of their flavor.

After washing the herbs, cut off the dead or discolored leaves and stems. They can then be tied together and hung up to dry.

One of the simplest ways is to tie

all the stems together and suspend them upside down in a small brown paper bag or in old pantyhose. If the leaves and seeds drop from the stems, they will be in the bag. A bag also keeps the dust, bugs and spiders out.

Hang herbs upside down in the bag so the oils will flow into the leaves for more flavor. Cut a few holes in the paper bag so the moisture can escape.

Herbs generally take 5 to 10 days to dry in a paper sack, said Oehler.

For quicker results, use a dehydrator or microwave. Dehydrators can produce a quality dried herb in 1-3 hours. Be sure not to have the dehydrator too hot. It is best to dry herbs at 90-100 degrees. If dried at higher temperature it will dissipate the herb oils and lose flavor.

Oehler does not recommend sun drying because the light will cause

color changes and losses in aroma and flavor of the herbs.

Microwaves work great for drying small quantities of herbs in mere minutes. Do not dry more than one cup at a time, she advised.

Place the herbs between microwave-safe paper towels, and microwave on high for two to four minutes. Check to see if the leaves have dried. If not, reset the timer for a few more seconds. Let the herbs completely cool before packaging.

"If you dry too large a quantity in the microwave at one time it will cook them instead of drying them," said Oehler. "It is best to let them air dry for a little while after the microwave process so that the temperature and moisture evens out."

Package dry herbs in a cool, dry, dark place in any container which excludes air, light and moisture.

## Low outdoor lighting is a winner

BY MALINDA WIER

Not long ago, the only light that fell on your home or yard each evening came from the moon or a street light.

Now homeowners have a lot more control over outdoor lighting.

One of the most popular approaches today is low-voltage outdoor lighting. It's attractive, easy and inexpensive.

A basic lighting kit (about \$70) contains 20 lights, 100 feet of wire and a small weatherproof transformer box. But you can get any number of lights and any length of wire you want.

The transformer, which plugs into an outdoor electrical outlet, converts your 120-volt household current to 12 volts, a little more than you would get from a 9-volt radio battery.

You can install the whole thing in no time.

The lights are mounted on plastic stakes, so you simply push them into the ground wherever you choose.

There are several varieties of low-voltage lights, each with a slightly

different, but very easy, method of connecting the power cable.

Lighting your front path adds drama and romance to your landscape.

Whether you add a few lights or dozens, outdoor lighting lets you spend more time outside. I have a

large extended family and we enjoy each other's company day or night. When we're at my house, the outdoor lights make it easy to see who's smiling the brightest.

See your local lighting specialist for advice on how to improve the livability of your home.

## Tips for radon home testing

The American Lung Association of Oregon offers ten tips for testing your home for radon.

Radon is a gas that you cannot see, smell or taste. But it's the second leading cause of lung cancer.

Testing is simple and here's how.

• Any home can have a radon problem, but testing is a simple precaution that everybody should take.

• Do-it-yourself test kits are available for \$10 to \$25 dollars from most hardware stores and other retail outlets.

• Choose a reliable kit. Look for the words "Meets EPA Requirements" or "EPA listed" on the package.

• Testing ranges from a few days to a year. Long-term tests are more accurate in predicting the year-round levels in a home.

• If a test indicates an elevated radon level, always test twice before taking action.

• Professional testing firms, listed by the EPA or the state can test your home for you.

• Repairs for homes with high levels are no more than many other common home repairs and will not change the appearance of your home. A variety of methods can be used, from sealing cracks in floors and walls, to changing the flow of air into your home.

• Always consult an EPA-qualified or state-certified radon contractor. They can evaluate the problem and help you select the right solution.

• You will want to get more than estimate and check references when hiring a tester.

• Contact the American Lung Association of Oregon for more information about radon, including names of qualified radon contractors and testing firms.

For further information on radon and other indoor air pollution, contact the American Lung Association of Oregon at (503) 246-1997 (in the Portland Metropolitan Area) or 1-800-LUNG-USA (throughout Oregon).

## Free informational seminar for home buyers

Julie Martin Williams and Dee-J Putzier of Century 21 Columbia Realty along with Jerry Driscoll of Crossland Mortgage will present two free classes for first-time home buyers. The first class is on Wednesday, November 6th, 6:30pm. The second class is Thursday November 14th,

1996, 6:30pm. Both classes will be held at Century 21 Columbia Realty in the One Embassy Center building next to Washington Square.

Participants will receive a free detailed information package as well as learning the basics of the home-buying process and current market

conditions. Participants will also have the opportunity to do a loan qualification worksheet to evaluate their own financial situation and find out what they can afford.

Call 241-2072 to reserve your seat for the November 6 seminar or 497-4817 for the November 14 seminar.



the new Habitat home for the Garcia family is a dream come true.

### Landlord training workshops

The first landlord training workshop on October 19, 1996 was well-attended and evaluations were positive. The workshop is targeted toward landlords and property managers with as few as one rental who may need educational and practical support in their dealings with tenants, especially low-income tenants.

There is a vital need for landlord education to promote communication and awareness of the issues that face many low-income tenants in our community.

We still have plenty of space available for the November 16, 1996 for this City and County supported effort to fill the space to capacity. For questions, comments, registration, or any additional information, please call 282-1964 between 9am and 2pm.

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## IGD OPEN HOUSE

Featuring - Scanview, Scitex, Gerber, Barco, Pantone & DK&A Pantone will be giving a special presentation for end users on Thursday (9am-10:30pm) that will focus on Pantone's Hexachrome color technology.

Friday 15th - Special seminar - 9:00--Pantone Hexachrome & Hi-Fi color.

Technologies available for your review:

**Scanview**--Drum and Flatbed scanners, Imagesetters and productivity software.

**Gerber**--Short run digital label printing systems, profitable and affordable.

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Please RSVP with Brad Hoyer or Paul Hosteley at 800-826-1610.

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