

FOOD

The Portland Observer respectfully requests all comments and family recipes that you would like to share. Please address them in e-mail to sharon@portlandobserver.com.

Gather Your Materials

Besides seeds or plants, you'll need soil, containers and the promise of warmth and lots of sunlight.

Soil: The best type of soil to use for window herbs is a mixture of potting soil, peat moss and perlite. This mixture, or one very similar, is available in most garden stores.

Containers: Plastic window boxes, clay window boxes and clay pots of an appealing weight, size, shape and color are only a few possibilities. Visit your local garden store for inspiration or look around the house for unconventional containers like a retired teapot or broken mugs. These unorthodox planters can make visually pleasing gardens that reveal your personality. Punch drainage holes into their bases and plant an assortment of herbs and edible flowers such as nasturtiums.

Sunlight: All of the herbs listed above require at least four hours of sunlight every day, so be sure you have a sunny window sill somewhere in your home, or a fluorescent light that can be set up to shine on the herbs for at least four hours a day.

Herb Varieties

Basil

Start with seeds or seedlings.



Chives

Start with seeds.



Cilantro (Coriander)

Start with seeds.



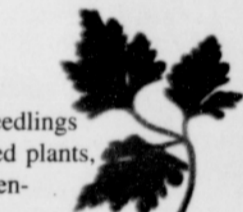
Oregano

Start with seedlings.



Parsley

Start with seedlings or established plants, with this often-used herb.



Sage

Start with seedlings.



Thyme

Start with seedlings.



Creamy Herb Dressing



"This takes the basic ranch salad dressing one step further by incorporating a generous quantity of fresh herbs."

Ingredients

- 1/4 small bunch dill, stems removed (about 1/4 cup loosely packed leaves)
- 1/4 bunch flat-leaf parsley, stems removed (about 3/4 cup loosely packed leaves)
- 1/4 bunch thyme, stems removed (about 2 Tbs. loosely packed leaves)

- 1/2 bunch chives, coarsely chopped (1/3 cup)
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 Tbs. cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 tsp. hot sauce

Directions

In a food processor, combine the dill, parsley, thyme and chives with the mayonnaise; process until the herbs are chopped. With the motor running, slowly pour in the buttermilk and then add the vinegar, salt, pepper and hot sauce. Taste and adjust seasoning. Pour into a bottle or jar and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

Wow Mom

Herb-garden kits are perfect gifts for Mother's Day, birthdays or for the cook in your life. If you'd like to give a kitchen-herb garden as a gift, package the seeds (or seedlings), soil and containers together with helpful gardening tools like kitchen shears, a small watering can, gardening gloves and a booklet of recipes using herbs in the kit. Wrap the entire garden kit up with cellophane and a pretty ribbon.

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KITCHEN HERB GARDENING

Bring a little life to your windowsill and reap the culinary rewards of a kitchen herb garden.

Herbs are especially agreeable to indoor cultivation because most require plentiful sunlight and a warm climate. If your kitchen isn't the sunny place herbs demand, take a walk around your home and decide upon the most amenable place to start a garden growing, and get started!

Selection of Herbs: A Matter of Taste

Selecting which herbs to grow may be the most difficult aspect of beginning an herb garden. One way to decide which herbs to grow is to consider which dishes you like to eat best and choose herbs that are integral or complementary to those particular dishes.



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