

Gardening

Windowsill herbs



By Pat Leuchtman
leisure Columnist

The cook need not give up the piquancy of fresh herbs just because the garden has been put to bed. If you have a sunny window you can keep a handful of fresh herbs growing in the house all winter. Anyone who has used fresh herbs knows that there is no comparison between them and the tins of supermarket herbs that have been languishing on a back shelf in the pantry for over a year.

And for those who have not grown herbs in the garden before, or had the pleasure of snipping fresh parsley and chives into an omelet aux fines herbes, a winter windowsill herb garden may be the start of new gardening and cooking adventures.

Herbs can be as easy to grow indoors as they are outside and they are as attractive as many houseplants. They do require a window that gets at least five hours of sun-

light and the pots used for planting should be carefully "crocked." This is, you should put a layer of stones or broken flowerpot shards in first. This will prevent the pot's drainage hole from becoming plugged up with soil and will ensure good drainage which is vital to successful herb culture.

As a potting medium you can use any commercial potting soil mixed with either sand or vermiculite. A good proportion would be two parts soil to one part vermiculite.

If you dig up an herb plant from the garden, shake the soil from its roots and then be sure you choose a pot that is large enough to give the roots enough room to grow. Crock your pot, put in a little soil, place the plant in it and arrange the roots so they are not crowded or tangled and fill the pot with more soil. Do not fill the pot right to the rim with soil, but leave enough room so that the plant can be watered without dripping water and soil over the edge of the pot. This fresh soil will

give your plant a good start and nourish it longer than the soil it has been growing in. It isn't a good idea to bring unsterilized garden soil into the house anyway because you may also bring in unwanted pests and diseases.

Rosemary is a very tender perennial. If you have it growing in the garden it should be lifted out, potted and brought inside for the winter. You may have to divide the plant into sections that are small enough to fit into a flower pot.

If you don't have rosemary already, autumn is a good time to acquire a plant from a florist or nursery so that you can enjoy the beauty of its needle-like evergreen needles and its tangy flavor in soups and stuffings all winter. A particular treat is to roast leg of lamb with rosemary. Delicious.

Chives are a sturdy perennial and will do fine out in the garden all winter. To have chives to use you can pick, snip, bag and freeze chives or you can dig up a clump or two and bring them into the kitchen. Chives have a lusty root system so

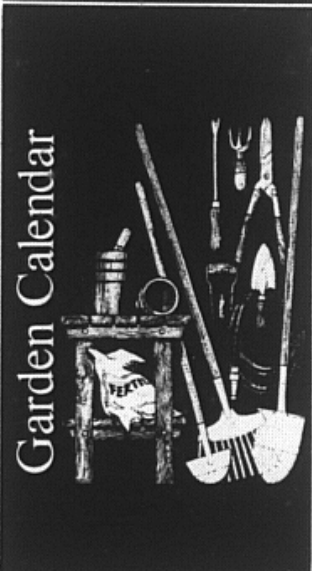
your pot, put in your parsley seed and then water it with boiling water right out of the kettle. Violent treatment, but it seems to break the seed case and make germination easier.

You won't have this trouble with basil. It grows quickly and easily from seed. In no time at all you will have its shiny broad leaves to toss into your spaghetti sauce and other Italian dishes. It is also good mixed with salad dressing used on tomatoes.

Recently there has been a lot of interest in cooking as a creative process and people have become more sophisticated in their cooking. They've come to rely on herbs for subtle nuances of flavor, but herbs can also add a new dimension to hearty plain cooking.

Because this interest is becoming more general it is easier to locate herb seeds. Indeed, at this time of the year herb seeds for planting indoors can often be found at gourmet and food specialty shops as well as at florists and nurseries.

Keep your green thumb in action this winter and bon appetit. □



Garden Calendar

The following information is provided by the Franklin County Extension Service:

Now is the time to:

- Protect newly planted shrubs their first winter.
- Rake up leaves and compost them. By leaving leaves on the ground, insects and diseases may overwinter. Remember to clean under grapevines and fruit trees, gathering and destroying any fruits on the ground that are insect infested or diseased.
- Keep lawn cut until grass stops growing.
- Overwinter roses.

Note:

- Use room temperature water for house plants.
- Daylilies can still be divided.

be sure to give them plenty of room in the pot. Chives can also be started from seed in a pot.

Freshly chopped chives make a beautiful garnish for cream soups and many other dishes. They are also useful for their delicate oniony flavor.

Parsley is the most ubiquitous culinary herb, also used as much for garnish as for flavoring. Chives and parsley are two of the major herbs in fines herbes mixtures used in omelets and French cooking.

Parsley is also good for you; it's an excellent source of vitamins A and C.

This herb germinates with some difficulty. Supposedly it must go to the devil seven times and back before the seeds sprout; witches generally have good luck growing it. If you are not a witch, try preparing



AUTUMN CLEARANCE

SUNGLASSES
Non-Prescription

20% TO 50% OFF

Offer Expires
Nov. 30, 1980

Schaff OPTICIANS, INC.
473 Main St.
Greenfield, Mass.
073, 5317
Mag Office Center
Luton, 108 Main
114, 2259

Serving New England for Over 50 Years