

# HOME & GARDEN

## Annual herbs spice up the garden

By PAT LEUCHTMAN  
Recorder Columnist

Many herbs are perennials and should have their own special beds where they can grow without being disrupted every spring, but there are several annual culinary herbs that can be planted in the vegetable garden. It is wonderful to have fresh pungent herbs to use with your own home-grown vegetables and the annual herbs are not difficult to grow.

Parsley is probably the most common culinary herb. Most restaurants could not survive for long without a steady supply of curly green leaves to

### BETWEEN THE ROWS

gild the baked had-dock and boiled potato. Because most of us first see it used as a garnish, it is sometimes hard to realize how important parsley can be in flavoring soups, stews, stuffings, omelets and almost anything else you can name. It is not only pretty, and delicious, it is also good for you. Parsley is very high in vitamins A and C and iron. Feel free to use it generously as a flavoring and as a salad ingredient.

Although common, parsley has a long and romantic history. The Greeks used parsley at riotous banquets to absorb the fumes of the wine and to prevent drunkenness. During the Middle Ages it developed a bad reputation because it took so long to germinate. It was said that it had to go to the devil and back seven times before it would sprout and only witches were thought to cultivate it successfully.

In fact anyone can grow parsley and one trick that people use to speed up germination is to water the newly planted seeds with boiling water.

I prefer to plant the flat-leaved Italian parsley. It is better for drying, more flavorful and nutri-

tious. It likes a fertile soil enriched with compost and I usually plant some parsley among my tomato plants because they are mutually beneficial when grown near each other.

Parsley is actually a biennial, but is treated as an annual. Chervil is a real annual, sometimes called gourmet parsley, and along with parsley it is used in fines herbes mixtures (as are basil, chives, tarragon and thyme). Its delicate leaves resemble parsley but they are finer and almost seem fringed.

It can be planted in the fall when it will germinate quickly. If the weather is mild, it will stay green all winter long. Or plant it very early in the spring, directly where it is to grow because it doesn't transplant well. Although it doesn't demand a rich soil, it likes to be kept moist and a mulch will help to keep the roots cool.

Chervil is excellent in salads and a wonderful seasoning in spinach and sorrel soups. It can be dried, or frozen for winter use.

Coriander is sometimes called Chinese parsley (every country likes to have a parsley, I guess) and it is used in many oriental dishes.

Cilantro is a Spanish name for coriander — a versatile herb. It has a strong flavor that is reminiscent of sage and lemon. It should be used sparingly until you find out what strength pleases you most. The leaves are not as strongly flavored as the ground seeds and they can be used in soups, meatloaf or even tossed in a salad.

Sow coriander early in the spring. Make sure it is well covered by soil and tamped down or a good rainfall will float the seeds away. It takes two weeks to germinate.

Basil is one of my favorite herbs. I love it in tomato sauces or sprinkled on broiled tomatoes, but best of all I like to use it in pesto. Pesto is a mixture of tomato paste, basil, olive oil and grated

Parmesan cheese. I use it plain on pasta or spoon fresh vegetable soup over a dollop of pesto in a bowl.

Basil is a small attractive plant with deep green shiny leaves. (It also comes in a purple variety.) Plant when the soil has warmed slightly. It prefers a rich, well-drained loam in full sun. It is easy to grow and you will find a myriad of uses for it.

Besides trying it for winter use, Conny Lewis of the Kitchen Garden in Charlemont showed me how to blend basil leaves with a little olive oil in a blender. This can then be packed into small plastic bags and frozen. It's a great way to add zip to sauces and soups during the winter. This year I am planting Piccolo Verde Fino basil which Epicure Seeds assures me is the ultimate basil for use in pesto.

Because I am part Swedish, I could not end any column on annual herbs without mentioning dill. For me, dill conjures up the vision of summer picnics beside Lake Champlain with limitless supplies of shrimp and pickled herring and salad.

Dill is obviously used in making pickles, but you might also want to try making your own dill vinegar by soaking the dill heads in a distilled white vinegar for a month or two in the sun. Then strain, boil and bottle in sterilized bottles. It will give your winter salads an appetizing tang.

Julia Child has a nice recipe for a dill sauce to use on cold eggs, vegetables or fish. Beat 1 egg yolk and 4 tablespoons cream in a bowl 'til blended. Then beat in ½ cup vinaigrette slowly, as though making mayonnaise. Season to taste with lemon juice and add 2 tablespoons of chopped dill.

Plant dill directly where it is to grow in a rich, loose soil in full sun. You will be able to start harvesting leaves in about eight weeks.

Plant a few herbs in your garden and you'll guarantee yourself a yearful of good eating.

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## Plan now for late broccoli

By PETER TONGE  
Christian Science Monitor

Now, as conventional garden advice has it, you should plant broccoli and re-

garden, where the soil has been improved over the years. I have modified the