

Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

Our Theme

This issue of the Inside Dirt is in a different format. It features information and recipes using herbs and fresh produce. The choice of format derives from the widespread interest in kitchen gardens and cooking with herbs among the Henderson County Master Gardeners. So enjoy the articles and try a new recipe, perhaps with herbs from your garden.

Growing Sage in East Texas

Dawnvolyn Callahan

Sage is the most commonly recognized member of the salvia family, which consists of over ninety species. Culinary sages are available in numerous colors and textures, but the flavor will most usually evoke memories of Thanksgiving or delicious breakfast sausages.



Although sage is often regarded as an easy herb to grow it should be noted that it dislikes the combination of high heat with high humidity. Fortunately the Berggarten variety, the hardiest for our hot humid area, is readily available. Also raised beds that provide well-drained soil go a long way toward keeping sage plants happy. A little lime will help as well.

You can begin to pinch leaves from your sage plants soon after planting. Since it is an evergreen perennial I try to use my sage fresh from the garden year round. If you choose to preserve sage by drying be sure that the process is complete. The high content of essential oils may turn rancid if there is residual dampness. Many people choose to store sage in the freezer to preserve the flavor more fully.

Sage was believed to be a cure-all during the Middle Ages. It was used like aspirin to treat all kinds of bodily ailments. Today you can enjoy sage in all kinds of recipes for savory dishes and as a lovely little addition to your landscape.

Barvarian Style Sage-Infused Pork Chops

Dawnvolyn Callahan

4-6 loin pork chops cut 1 inch thick (boneless preferred) Season the chops with salt and pepper and lightly flour. Sear for 3 or four minutes on each side in olive oil. They should be nicely browned. Drain off excess fat. Add 2 cups of dry white wine. Add one sage leaf for each chop to the pan and simmer on very low heat for one hour. You may add 1-2 cups of whole mushrooms to wine and sage mixture if you like. After one hour remove the chops and discard to sage leaves. Reduce the remaining liquid to about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. Remove the liquid from the heat and whisk in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sour cream. (Do not use reduced fat sour cream since it will separate.) Plate the chops and garnish with a fresh sage leaf or two and rosemary blossoms.

Did You Know????

Margaret Dansby

What is the only vegetable that is only sold fresh? Not ever frozen, canned, or dried????
"lettuce"

THE GREEN WAY

I always rinse my milk jugs before I recycle them. I read an article not to pour the rinse water down the drain, but water your houseplants with it. This gives the plants calcium, phosphorus, and iron. The rinse from orange juice jugs provides potassium. I have tried this and my plants seem to love it. You probably will not need to fertilize additionally if you use these rinses. Try it!!!

Moss Milk Shake

One or 2 clumps (small handful of moss)

1/2 tsp. sugar

2 cups buttermilk

2 cups of water (or beer)

**Crumble the moss into a blender, add the sugar, buttermilk, and water (or beer). Blend on low until the mixture has the consistency of a milk shake. Add water if necessary.

**Paint the mixture onto rocks, pots or whatever you want the moss to grow.

**Keep moist until moss is well established. (spray bottle works great)

(My grandkids loved writing their names on large rocks and watching the moss grow).

Rosemary Sally Keenan

Rosemary, *Rosemarium officinalis*, is one of the first herbs to be recorded historically; references to it have been found on stone tablets that date to 5000 BC. It's a tough herb that grows in sunny, well-drained sandy or rocky locations. It's quite drought tolerant preferring not to have its feet too wet. Since the herb is indigenous to the Mediterranean area it is customarily cold hardy to 15-20 degrees. In our part of Texas all these attributes point toward a good landscape plant.



In fact Texas took a good plant and made it even better. Back in 1980 north Texas had an especially cold winter. Temperatures plummeted into the single digits during the nights and did not get over freezing in the daytime for over a week. Many tender perennials were severely damaged. However, a stand of rosemary discovered in Arp, Texas not only survived but flourished. Madelene Hill, a well-known author and herb lover, discovered the hardy rosemary in the little Smith County town and introduced it to the nursery trade. This "improved" rosemary

designated as 'Arp' is now sold as cold tolerant rosemary. It is said to be viable even to as low as -10 degrees Fahrenheit.

Although rosemary can be started from seed it is easier to simply purchase the plants or to start them from cuttings or by layering. I've had good luck rooting rosemary in a vase with a little water. When I need rosemary for cooking I cut a few branches from the garden and use what I need immediately. If I have extra cuttings I strip off the bottom leaves and stick the branches in a bud vase. They look pretty on the counter and I often find that within a few days they have put out roots. These rooted sprigs can then be potted.

A second way of starting new plants is called layering. Basically what you do is to bend a lower branch of rosemary over, cover the stem with soil, and keep it held in place until the branch takes root. The new plant can then be separated and replanted. Whatever way you decide to acquire rosemary it is an essential staple in a kitchen garden.

Not only are rosemary's silvery green needles edible but the flowers and stems as well. With thousands of years of use there are untold numbers of recipes calling for this herb. It would be hard to find a cookbook from any Mediterranean country without numerous recipes that include rosemary. Meat, fish, vegetables, eggs, are all complemented by its favor. There are even recipes for cakes and cookies that call for rosemary.

Rosemary does have a powerful flavor so it's important to use it carefully. One of the reasons I especially like to have rosemary growing in my garden is to have it available fresh all the time. The dried form available in the grocery store tends to be even more potent; I find it more difficult to regulate the taste. The fresh variety has a nicer flavor and blends better with the flavor of other ingredients.

I came across a clever hint when researching this article. An article by Gwen Stewart at <http://ezinearticles.com> recommended making herb skewers for barbecuing from stems of rosemary. Cut a long stem of rosemary; strip off the leaves; thread vegetables or meat onto the skewer for grilling. That sounds good to me.

Rosemary Refrigerator Cookies

Lois Mallette

From the April 29, Food section of the 1998 Texas Hill Country wine and Food Festival.

1 c. all-purpose flour
½ c. butter
½ c. sugar
1 egg yolk, beaten
½ teaspoon vanilla
2 T. chopped fresh rosemary
1 ¾ t. grated lemon zest
1/8 t. salt
powdered sugar

Combine flour and butter with a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add sugar; mix well. Add egg yolk, vanilla, rosemary, lemon zest and salt. Blend well and shape into oblong rolls. Wrap in wax paper and chill overnight. Slice ¼ inch thick. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Bake at 350 degrees 10 minutes. Makes 5 dozen cookies.

Lemon/Rosemary Steak Rub

Linda Benton

1½ t. grated lemon peel
1 t. dried rosemary leaves crushed
¼ t. dried thyme
¼ t. coarse ground pepper
2 large garlic cloves, minced

Combine all the ingredients. Rub over your favorite tender steak. Grill to desired doneness. Yield: enough to season 2 pounds of beef.

Classic Pesto

2 cups lightly packed fresh basil
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup pine nuts
½ to 2/3 cup olive oil
1 or 2 cloves garlic (optional)

Blend basil, cheese, pine nuts, ½ cup olive oil and garlic in a blender until smooth; add more oil, if needed. If made ahead cover and refrigerate for up to 5 days; freeze in ice cup trays for longer storage. Makes about 1 ½ cups.

This is a basic recipe for pesto. There are all kinds of variations. You can substitute other green herbs for part of the basil. A nice variation is to use ½ cup of fresh mint. Walnuts or even Macadamia nuts can be substituted for pine nuts. Let your imagination go wild.

Basil- the French *herbe royale*, derives its name from the Greek word for king, king of the herbs. Basil is an annual herb belonging to the mint family. It is a fast growing, bushy plant. Flowers should be pinched back to encourage a bushy plant and to prolong the life of the plant.



Red-Ruffle Basil

Tomatoes With Basil

Dan Reynolds

1 T. canola or extra-virgin olive oil
1 t. cider vinegar
1 t. dried basil leaves, crushed or 3 t. fresh basil, minced
¼ t. minced garlic
¼ t. salt
1/8 t. cracked pepper
pinch of sugar
2 medium tomatoes sliced ¼ inches thick
preferably one red and one yellow tomato
1 T. thinly sliced green onions

In a small bowl mix oil, vinegar, basil, garlic, salt, pepper, and sugar. Let stand 30 minutes. Lay the tomato slices out on a flat pan. Spoon the vinegar/oil mixture on to of each tomato. Cover with plastic wrap and chill at least 15 minutes. Garnish with feta or other white cheese.

Lemon-Basil Butter Cookies

Lois Malette

You'll love these delicately sweet butter cookies. Lemon brightens the flavor of the basil.

Yield: 6 1/2 dozen

1 cup fresh lemon-basil leaves*

1 3/4 cups sugar, divided

1 pound butter, softened

1/4 cup lemon juice

1 large egg

6 cups all-purpose flour

Garnish: fresh basil sprigs

Process basil and 1/4 cup sugar in a food processor until blended.

Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy; gradually add remaining 1 1/2 cups sugar, beating well. Add lemon juice and egg, beating until blended. Gradually add flour and basil mixture, beating until blended.

Shape dough into 1-inch balls, and place 2 inches apart on lightly greased baking sheets. Flatten slightly with bottom of a glass dipped in sugar.

Bake at 350° for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on wire racks. Garnish, if desired.

* Plain fresh basil leaves may be substituted for lemon-basil leaves.

Southern Living, May 2001



Thai Basil

A Garden Recipe

Jane Fox

This confetti-like side dish is a mainstay and one the kids will love to eat. It is a colorful complement to any type of burger, steak, grilled fish or fried chicken. Serve it warm or at room temperature, or make it a day ahead and chill it.

Roasted Pepper and Corn Succotash serves 6

4 ears white or yellow corn, husks removed

2 scallions, trimmed

2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1/2 red onion, diced small

1 red bell pepper, roasted (see below)

1 green bell pepper, roasted (see below)

juice of 1/2 lemon

1.2 bunch cilantro or chervil, finely chopped

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. In a dry, cast-iron skillet over high heat or over a hot grill, char the corn and scallions until they are partially blackened, 8 to 10 minutes. Cut the kernels from the cobs and chop the scallions; reserve them in a medium bowl.
2. In the same skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat and saute the red onion until soft and lightly colored, 5 minutes. Add to the corn and scallions.
3. Halve the roasted peppers and remove the cores, seeds and membranes. Dice the peppers and add to the vegetables along with the lemon juice and cilantro.
4. Season the succotash to taste with salt and pepper, transfer to serving bowl or plates and serve.

How to Roast Peppers

Using tongs, place a whole pepper over an open flame or under a broiler, turning occasionally, until the skins are completely charred and black, about 10 minutes. Put the pepper in a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let it cool for 10 minutes. Peel off the charred skin, rinsing with a little water if necessary. The peppers will be soft and blackened in spots. Remove the core and seeds.

Lemongrass Tea

Lois Mallette

From Martin Yan's Asian Favorites (Ten Speed Press) By Martin Yan

4 stalks lemongrass, cut into thirds, lightly crushed
4 cups water
3½ T. palm sugar (or brown sugar)
2 to 3 T dried jasmine leaves
ice cubes
Lime wedge, for garnish

In a non-reactive pan, bring lemongrass and water to a boil. Decrease heat; cover and simmer 10 minutes. Add sugar, simmer 3 minutes. Turn off heat; add leaves. Let steep 10 minutes. Strain. Let mixture cool; refrigerate until ready to use. Serve with ice cubes and lime wedge.

Blueberry Brunch Cake

3 eggs ½ c milk 1 c butter softened
1 t vanilla 2 cup flour 1 cup sugar
1T. baking powder 1 T. lemon juice
1 cup of blueberries
1 cup white chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350. In 1g bowl, beat together the eggs, milk, butter, baking powder, sugar, and vanilla until well blended. Add the flour and lemon juice, mix until thoroughly blended. Gently fold in the blueberries and the white chocolate chips. Pour the batter into a greased 9x9 inch pan. Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean

Blueberry Sauce

2 cups blueberries ½ cup sugar
½ cup apple juice 1 T. lemon juice
½ cup ginger ½ t salt

1 T. fresh shredded mint leaves, optional

Use a potato masher to mash the blueberries, and put the mashed berries in a sauce pan. Add the sugar, apple juice, lemon juice, mint, ginger, and salt. Turn the heat on medium and bring to boil; boil for 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat. Chill before serving

Blueberry Sour Cream Pie

4 oz cream cheese, softened
2 cups sour cream
½ cup sugar mixed with 1T flour
1½ cups blueberries
1T sugar
9" graham cracker crust

Mix together cream cheese, sour cream and sugar/flour mixture. Fold in blueberries, pour into crust, top with sugar and bake at 350 for 10 minutes. Cool and chill 2 hours.

Raspberry Almond Coffeecake

1 cup fresh raspberries 3 T brown sugar
1 cup flour 1/3 cup sugar
1/8 t salt ½ t baking powder
¼ t baking soda ½ cup sour cream
1 t vanilla 2 T butter, melted
1 t. vanilla 1 egg
¼ cup sliced almonds

Preheat oven to 350. Spray 8" round cake pan. Combine raspberries & brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Combine sour cream, butter, vanilla and egg; add to flour mixture. Stir just until moist. Spoon 2/3 of the batter into prepared pan. Spread raspberry mixture evenly over batter. Spoon remaining batter over raspberry mixture (it will not cover). Top with almonds. Bake for 40 min. Let cool for 10 minutes. Combine ¼ cup powdered sugar, 1 T milk and ¼ t vanilla and drizzle over the cake

Lavender Note

The lovely aroma that we associate with lavender is actually repugnant to insects. Placing sprigs of lavender in closets and drawers acts as a natural and effective moth repellent. The added plus is pleasantly fragrant clothing or linens

Parsley Note

The Romans ate parsley as a breath freshener after consuming garlic or wine.

Henderson County Office
2nd Floor, Courthouse Annex
101 E. Tyler St.
Athens, TX 75751

Henderson County
Master Gardener Association

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The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is sponsored by the Henderson County office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service which is a part of the Texas A&M University System. Its objectives are to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public, and to provide the community with information on good gardening practices.

<http://henderson-co-tx-mg.org/>

