

Growing Cooking Herbs (45 – 90 min. hands-on class) Lesson Plan

Objectives

Participants ...

- increase their knowledge of gardening, especially growing edibles.
- practice propagating and caring for plants.
- experience gardening as a way to reduce stress, improve mood, increase physical activity, enhance social connections, and support a healthy diet

Health messages

- Gardening can reduce stress, increase exercise, improve diet (reduce salt, add nutrients), improve mood, maintain social connections

Gardening messages

- San Diego's seasons: Cool season (winter & spring, Nov – Apr) and warm season (summer & fall, May – Oct)
- Annuals, perennials, biennials (meaning, plants that grow in each season)
- Propagating from seedlings, watering, harvesting

Classroom setup (allow 45 minutes)

- Arrange tables, put potting soil in tubs (2 people/tub), fill squirt bottles with water. Near each tub, set out coffee filters, gloves, labels, markers, pots, pot saucers
- Plants in accessible location
- Sign-in sheet near entryway
- Evaluation sheets, pens, handouts handy so they can be distributed at end of workshop (give people handout when they give you evaluation)

Materials

Broom, brush, dustpan, wipes for cleanup	Pots & saucers (+ extras)
Coffee filters (for bottom of pot)	Potting soil (two 1.5 cu ft bags)
Evaluation sheets (+ extras)	Sample of potted-up herbs
Gloves (nitrile, disposable)	Sign-in sheet & clipboard
Handouts (assembled, + extras)	Squirt bottles for watering plants (one per tub)
Lesson plan / script (several copies)	Tablecloths (optional)
MG badge, apron	Trash bags
Paper towels	Tubs (one for every two people attending)
Pens / pencils	Water (1-gal container, full)
Plant labels & markers	
Plants (3 plants/person + extras for demo and errors)	

Handouts

“Culinary herb profiles” (UCCE, Environmental Horticulture Notes, <http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/files/116768.pdf>)

“Gardening and food growing to reduce stress and stress-related illness” (Growing Health Network, https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/GH_Stress_Factsheet.pdf)

“What type of garden should I plant?” (UCCE, Nutrition BEST program)

“Getting started with container gardening” (UCCE, Nutrition BEST program)

“Grow your own vegetables – it’s worth it!” (UCCE, California Master Gardener program,

<http://sacmg.ucanr.edu/files/74897.pdf>)

Master Gardener bookmarks

UCANR pest notes: “Gardening with Good Bugs” and “Beneficial Predators”

Eatfresh.org recipes

Welcome & intro – 5 min.

Key points

- Introduce yourself and other MGs
- Master Gardeners are volunteers from University of California Cooperative Extension
- UCCE extends the research of the university to farmers and home gardeners by educating them about healthy, evidence-based practices.
- MGs educate the public throughout San Diego County in schools, community gardens, and elsewhere.
- This class is 45 min. (or 90 min) long, from start to finish
- Feel free to ask questions, though save general gardening questions until after class ends.

Health benefits of herbs – 5 min

Ask the group . . .

- Do you use herbs in your cooking?
- Which herbs?
- Why do you use them? What do they do for the food?
- Do you grow your own?
- What do you grow?

Key points

- Growing herbs and using them in food can be a part of maintaining your own and your family’s health and well-being
- Herbs reduce the amount of salt needed, enhance flavors, add nutrients.
- Herbs are easy and enjoyable to grow – they’re low-maintenance and offer appealing scents, textures, and flavors
- Research shows that gardening and being around plants reduce stress, improve mood, and promote health & well-being.
- For example, gardening lowers cortisol levels in the body (cortisol is one of the body’s stress hormones). See handout for details.

Identifying herbs (gather everyone around the herbs) – 10 min.

Key points & steps

- Invite people to explore the herbs –touch, taste, smell
- Identify the herbs with the group

- Annuals (live for a single growing season and die after flowering once -- e.g., basil, cilantro)
- Biennials (live for two years but often treated as annuals -- e.g., parsley, dill)
- Perennials (live from year to year and may flower many times -- e.g., mint, oregano, rosemary, thyme)
- OK to mix annuals and perennials in a pot or garden bed
- Cool season (winter and spring months in So Cal – e.g., parsley, cilantro)
- Warm season (summer and fall months in So Cal – e.g., basil, mint)

Planting demonstration (suggest people watch) – 5 min

Steps . . .

- Show sample
- Place coffee filter in bottom of pot
- Fill pot with soil to about 3 inches below rim
- Remove plants from pots/pony packs, explaining process
- Gently tease out roots, explaining why
- Place plants on soil and add more to bring soil level to 1 inch below pot's rim
- Gently tuck plants in to remove air pockets
- Water lightly with squirt bottle
- Place pot on saucer
- Label plants

Planting activity – 15 min.

Tell people to . . .

- Find a work station (2 people per tub)
- Choose 2 – 3 plants
- Take plants to your station and pot them up
- MGs will answer questions and assist as needed

Key points (offer these while most people are finishing up)

- Herbs need about 6 hours of sunlight a day, preferably morning sun (window, porch, backyard)
- Plants in containers dry out more quickly than plants in the ground
- Keep soil moist for about a week after planting
- After first week, check soil regularly, and add water when top 1 inch of soil has dried out
- No need to fertilize soil – herbs need little soil fertility. Avoid using houseplant food on edible plants.

Questions?

Wrap-up – 5 min.

- Thank everyone
- Pass out (and collect) evaluations
- Pass out handouts

Cleanup