



April/May

University of California Cooperative Extension

Welcome to Nutrition BEST Gardening! At Nutrition BEST, we're working to make healthy food and healthy lifestyles available to everyone. In this newsletter, you will find projects, ideas, and resources for gardening with kids of all ages, even the very youngest. **Let's grow together!**

Project of the Month: Plant a Windowsill Herb Garden



Herbs are fun and easy to grow on a sunny windowsill, balcony, or patio. Kids can help fill pots with soil, sprinkle seeds on the surface, and water their miniature herb gardens. Here's how to get started!

1. Select which herbs you want to grow. Basil, cilantro, dill, parsley, baby greens, and chives are all easy to grow from seed. They all like plenty of sunlight, warmth, and regular watering.
2. Choose a flowerpot for each herb, or pick out a big pot to grow several kinds of herbs in together. Larger containers give plants more room, and will dry out less quickly between waterings.

3. Fill the pot with potting soil or seed-starting mix. (Do not use garden soil, as it is too heavy.) Check the seed packet to see how deeply to plant your seeds; most herb seeds are planted about 1/4" deep. Follow the instructions on the packet to plant your herb seeds in the potting soil.
4. Keep the soil moist but not soggy. Water when the soil is dry to the touch. Add water until it comes out the bottom of the pot. Water gently — be careful not to wash your seedlings out of the soil!
5. Put the container in a sunny window, or outdoors in a warm, sunny spot. Most herbs need 5-6 hours of direct sunlight a day to grow well.
6. For bigger, healthier plants, fertilize once a month with a half-strength solution of organic all-purpose liquid fertilizer, following package directions. Only fertilize when the soil is damp. Do not use pesticides on your herbs.
7. When the plants are big enough, snip off some leaves to use in your cooking. Pinch off any flower shoots to encourage the plants to keep growing leaves. Enjoy your herb garden!



Dill



Basil



Cilantro



Baby Greens



Chives

In The Garden: April and May

This is one of the busiest times of the year for gardeners... here's a checklist to help you get growing!

It's time to plant your summer garden! Most summer veggie plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, and cucumbers, are very cold-sensitive and will die if there is a frost — so check the weather and the last frost date for your area before planting. Late April to early May is usually best for planting in the foothills.

Plant a last crop of **lettuce, radishes, and greens** before the weather gets too hot.

Pull weeds as they sprout! They will be easiest to pull while they are small, and while the ground is still moist. Spread mulch around plantings to help conserve water and keep weeds at bay.

If you have a larger garden, **consider adding drip irrigation** to make watering easier and reduce water use. Drip irrigation uses small hoses to deliver water right where plants need it. You can even set your irrigation system on a timer to water your garden when you are out of town! Look for an irrigation kit, or ask for advice at a nursery or garden center. A drip system is not difficult to set up, and can save you a lot of water and work over the course of a growing season.



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Did You Know?

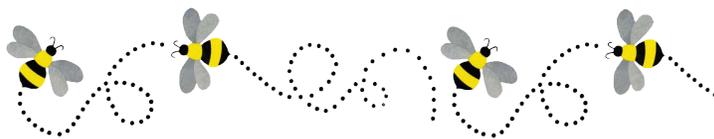
The average strawberry has 200 seeds. It's the only fruit that bears its seeds on the outside.

Peanuts are not nuts, but legumes related to peas, beans, and lentils.

Bamboo is the fastest-growing woody plant in the world; it can grow 35 inches in a single day.

Plants that need to attract moths for pollination are generally white or pale yellow, to be better seen when the light is dim. Plants that depend on butterflies, such as poppies or hibiscus, have more colorful flowers.

To make one pound of honey, bees must collect nectar from 2 million flowers!



Recipe: Strawberry Kale Smoothie

Smoothies are a great way to get the whole family eating more fruits — and greens! Even picky eaters love this smoothie recipe. Try making it with your favorite fruits, such as peaches, or other healthy greens like spinach.

Yield: 3 servings

Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup strawberries
- 1/2 cup kale
- 1 ripe banana, frozen
- 1 cup yogurt
- 3-4 ice cubes
- 1/4 cup milk or juice



Directions:

1. In the jar of a blender, add the kale, then the strawberries and yogurt.
2. Slice banana and add to blender.
3. Add ice and milk, and blend until smooth. You may want to add half the milk and then check the consistency, adding more if needed.



Nutrition BEST

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