

Homegrown Herbs

By Andrea Peck

Q. Can I grow my culinary herbs inside?

A. If you like to cook with your own fresh herbs, you may wonder if you can save your Fitbit a few calculations by growing your plants indoors. The answer is a resounding yes. With a little specific care, most herbs can be successfully grown inside.

Depending on your home situation, herbs can be planted together in a large container or separately. Avoid choosing a container based on the cuteness factor. Herbs prefer a roomy pot (at least 6") with good drainage. Clay pots are considered a good choice because air circulates through the pores of the clay.

Use a rich, loamy potting soil with added perlite to promote drainage. Don't go digging in your yard--soil from the garden may contain elements that are better processed by outdoor conditions.

After you have negotiated the potting process, make sure you select a warm, sunny spot for your meal accoutrement. Herbs grow best in natural light; they need four hours a day at minimum. Steer clear of heater vents, frosty windows and excess humidity. Generally, a southwestern window provides the best source of light--the closer to the kitchen the better. Plants that are not receiving enough light will try to reach out and poke you by growing "leggy." Brown spots can indicate burning from the sun. Rotate plants to allow the sun to reach all sides.

Herbs thrive with consistent irrigation, but they flounder when they "sit" in water. Maintain a schedule, allowing plants to dry out between watering. Check frequently for insects and blemishes. Most bugs can be washed or gently picked off. Leaves with fungus-type brown spots can be trimmed to prevent spreading. Use a suitable fertilizer once a month—one that is low in phosphorus will deter flowering. Pick your herbs often; they grow better that way.

With your herbs at hand, you can avoid the truculent weather, add zest to your meal and stay put—but, I'm afraid you will have to find another way to get in your 10,000 steps per day.