

Indoor Herb Gardening

It seems so cold and dreary outside these days with less sunlight and colder temperatures. A good way to keep your green thumb working, and to help keep you away from the winter blues, is to grow herbs indoors. This is a great way to keep fresh herbs for culinary usage throughout the winter and early spring. Herbs that are typically grown indoors include thyme, sage, and oregano. These three are great herbs that can be used in many different holiday recipes as well as your everyday recipes. These are great choices for indoor grown herbs to have all winter long.

Indoor grown herbs need to be placed in the sunniest windowsill in your home. They need at least 10 hours of light each day to get their maximum growth. Supplemental light may be necessary to get the full amount of light they need each day, this can be controlled with a timer to make sure that it is turned on and off equally each day. This supplemental light should only be 8-10 inches from the plants themselves to get the maximum light intensity for the plants. Along with the amount of light the plants receive, you should make sure that your herbs are not placed near a drafty window or a drafty location in your home.

Herbs like to be in well-drained soil, so make sure that the soil that you pick is well-drained. Don't use a clay soil or something out of your yard. The soil mixture can be a soilless mixture that is actually a growing media that doesn't contain any soil at all. These mixes typically contain perlite, vermiculite, and peat moss. These three components can be bought separately and mixed by you or they can be bought as a pre-mix growing media. You will probably need to go to a nursery for these products because most other stores have already gotten rid of their planting products by this time of the year, at least in Nebraska. Because herbs like well-drained soil, you need to make sure that you do not overwater your plants or allow them to sit in water. There should be drainage holes in the bottom of the pot they are planted in. Place the pot in a saucer or some type of dish to catch the extra water, but never leave the plants sitting in a saucer of water. Allow the plants to dry out some between each watering but do not let them get too dry.

Harvesting these wonderful fresh herbs throughout the winter is the best part of growing herbs indoors throughout the winter months. The harvest is quite easy, just snip off stems before they bloom to get the best flavor. After a few cuttings, the plant will regenerate new growth throughout the entire winter. Remember, fresh herbs are different than dried herbs when used in cooking. Generally, you should use three times the amount of fresh herbs than you would in dried herbs to get a similar taste. You can dry your fresh herbs for storage. Just place the herbs on a wire rack laid out singly in a room with low humidity. The information for this article came from an article by Sarah Browning, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator in Lancaster County, on growing herbs, specifically thyme, sage, and oregano.

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