

Herbal Aromas



I gave up planting fruits and veggies years ago but I have not given up on herbs. Every year I make sure I have plenty of those.

I've changed some of what I plant because my garden is much smaller now, but there's nothing like cooking with fresh herbs. I love stepping into my garden to pick herbs when I need to incorporate them into a dish. They smell lovely when I'm in the yard sipping tea or drinking ice water while reading a magazine.

Some people have what they call an herb garden. They pick a patch of land and concentrate on planting all of their herbs in one place. I don't do that. I live in Chicago and patches of land are hard to come by. My garden is patches and pots scattered across a balcony, so I incorporate my herbs right in with the flowers in the pots.

There are certain herbs I make sure I have every year:

Basil is my mainstay. I used to plant purple and green basil but now I stick with the traditional green. I make sure at the mid-point of summer to make plenty of pesto with my basil and I freeze it in teeny containers so I can use it throughout the colder months. I garnish dishes all summer long with individual

basil leaves that I cut into a chiffonade.

Chives are fun. They are a perennial but I don't have room for a chive patch anymore. I just buy a couple little plants and put them in pots amongst the flowers. I love the little purple flowers and use them either in salads or as a cutting flower in a little vase on the table. I love the texture of the plant in the garden. The spikes of chives leaves sticking up make a nice counterpoint to flowers.

Sage is another favorite. There are lots of kinds of sage but I just concentrate on the traditional green. One exotic thing I do is take the leaves and gently deep fry them in coconut oil. Serve them as a snack at a dinner party. Even people who don't usually like sage love deep-fried sage. They taste like little potato chips with a sage profile.



I have been known to plant sorrel. I use that in salads. It's pretty, too.

I always have mint and parsley. Each year I rotate which mint I choose and which parsley. I might go curly or flat on the parsley. Or both. I garnish with curly parsley and use the fresh stuff in cooking because it has more depth to the flavor. I plant cilantro. I also might plant spearmint, peppermint, and sometimes even chocolate mint.

I miss planting things like tarragon and rosemary. But alas, I just don't have room anymore. I'm a big fan of lemon balm, too. I used to have lemon thyme growing along the path in my big garden. You can actually walk on it and it holds up just great. As you walk it releases the lemon smell. Really cool.

The smell of basil, mint and lemon balm growing in the garden are my absolute favorites. Sometimes I pull off a leaf or two

and just rub it between my fingers and soak up the aroma. When I'm reading in my garden I can smell the fresh herbs growing in the pots around me. For me, that's the smell of summer.

What are your favorite herbs to plant? Do you do them in pots or do you have an herb garden? Let's share herbal stories – you can post your favorite garden herbs in the comments section at the bottom of this article.

It's a little early in the year to be talking about making pesto (at least in the Midwest) but since we're talking herbs I thought I'd give you my pesto recipe now. That way, when your basil is mature you'll have this recipe at the ready. It's delicious.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.



Pesto

I have seen in some restaurant menus that chefs have made pesto with walnuts, so I decided macadamia nuts must work too. Now I can attest. They not only work, it tastes great!