

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 16, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "BRINGING THE HERB GARDEN INDOORS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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You remember, I'm sure, the scene in Hamlet, where poor mad Ophelia comes in with her basket of flowers and herbs, saying, "Rosemary,- that's for remembrance..... Pansies for thoughts..... There's fennel for you, and columbine..... There's rue for you; here's some for me; we may call it herb o' grace, o' Sundays. Oh, you must wear your rue with a difference."

Shakespeare evidently knew much of the lore of earlier times than his own, which gave to many herbs some special significance in addition to their reputed medicinal and culinary values: Marjoram for happiness, rosemary for remembrance, thyme for courage, gray sage for long life and immortality. I must confess that when I eat chicken stuffing seasoned with thyme and sage, I haven't reflected much on courage or immortality. But I always liked the sound of "rosemary for remembrance."

If you are one of those garden enthusiasts who have devoted a little corner to growing rosemary and other aromatic and savory herbs, your family has doubtless enjoyed a good variety of flavors all summer. Although an herb garden is a very small part of the family food supply plan, it adds interest and zest to the use of home grown food, and requires very little effort.

I hope you have dried a number of your herbs for winter seasonings and also for fragrance; perhaps bay leaves, anise, dill, caraway, celery tops, coriander, summer savory, sage and thyme. Other useful herbs you can keep growing all winter if you bring them indoors and make a place for them in a sunny window, according to W. R. Beattie of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Yes, I mean the W.R.B. so often mentioned in my radio chats.

Sweet marjoram, often associated with sage and thyme in seasoning, is one of the herbs you can grow indoors in cold weather. Parsley flourishes the year around, wintering well in a window box or flower pot. No housekeeper needs to be told how to use parsley in soups, stews, or sprinkled on buttered vegetables. Basil, with its clove-flavored leaves and flowers, grows well in pots, too, and makes a delightful potherb for seasoning meats, tomato dishes, soups, and salads. Chives, those little cousins of the onion, will put out their delicate green shoots all winter if you plant them in till boxes, pots, or in one section of a long wooden window box devoted to herbs. You'll want chopped chives for your salads, and often for soups and other foods where a trace of onion flavor just makes the dish.

Don't forget to transplant a few thrifty roots from your mint bed. A mint leaf goes as well in a cup of hot tea as in a glass of iced tea or any other cold

beverage; then you can have mint sauce with your lamb, or chopped mint leaves in your stuffings, mint-flavored jelly, even candied mint leaves.

In Greek mythology, Mintha was the daughter of the river god of Hades, Cocytus. (Pronounced Co-si-tus). Pluto's queen, Proserpine, (Pro-serp'-in-ee) turned Mintha into a plant which we know as mint, which has ever grown near water. Mint was mentioned in the Bible, as one of the herbs considered acceptable for tithes.

Cress is another water-loving herb which you can grow in boxes or trays in a greenhouse if the soil is well limed and kept fairly wet. And for simple fragrance as well as for flavoring jellies and beverages, for scenting fingerbowls and the house generally, you may want to save some lemon verbena, rose geranium, and rosemary.

The first necessity in bringing the herbs indoors is to get them in early enough. One writer on the subject says she "takes her cue the first time she hears the katydids, for they are supposed to herald the approach of frost six weeks ahead." I doubt if the entomologists would admit this prophetic power in any insect. But at any rate, this gardener's system is to pot immediately the plants she wants to save, and then to bury the pots in the ground up to frost time. The plants go on growing and, she believes, they become accustomed to root confinement before they are transferred inside for the winter. In our northern states, there are often several short periods during October and November which we call "Indian summer." During these spells, the plants may be set outdoors in the sunshine every day for a while.

Mr. Beattie says that the main point about wintering herbs in boxes or pots is to have good soil all ready for them. He recommends a soil consisting of 1 part sharp sand, 1 part well-rotted manure, and 2 or 3 parts of good garden loam. Mix the soil very completely, adding a very small amount of bone meal, and screen it through a coarse screen to remove any lumps before placing it in the box or flower-pots.

Pots are good for the plants that have developed deep roots, but you can use a long shallow box that fits one of your sunny windows and plant three or four different herbs in it. The length of the box doesn't matter, but it should be about 8 inches deep and 6 to 10 inches wide.

Before you fill the box or flower-pots with the soil you have mixed and screened, provide for drainage. Put in a layer of broken stones about an inch deep. The flower-pot will have a hole in the bottom, but you will have to drill one or two holes in the window box. Set flower-pots in saucers but do not allow any water to stand in the saucers. Do not crowd the plants in a window box. Water them twice a week or oftener if the soil seems to be drying out. Plants growing in pots should be given a little water every day. The idea is to see that the soil for all the herbs is moist but never soaked.

None of these plants will stand freezing temperature, and none of them like the gas fumes from a kitchen stove or the hot dry air from a furnace. It is quite likely the kitchen is not the best place for the indoor herb garden, even if it does get good sunlight. Choose a room near enough to the kitchen, however to save steps when you want a bit of parsley or a few mint leaves.

