

More Herbs to Consider

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As a result of the Covid 19 protection strategies families are expanding their gardening activities to take advantage of the new time they have together at home. Herb gardening is one of the most popular types of gardening chosen because it offers the opportunity to dig in the soil and has a major impact on the family's meals with a minimum requirement of space. Last week we explored the idea of hot weather and cool weather herbs while discussing basil, parsley, cilantro, mint, and rosemary.

Lemongrass has long been an important part of Asian dishes and teas. Local gardeners like the fragrance and the lemon taste that it provides for their recipes. The best results seem to occur when small stems of the plant are cut at the base, cooked with the dish, and then removed prior to eating. Remove the browned or dried stems from your plant to encourage the production of new, more tender stems.

Lemongrass is definitely a summer herb; it quickly dies if it experiences freezing temperatures. To grow a usable source, obtain a clump of stems and roots from your favorite nursery. To keep it alive over the winter lemongrass can be grown in a container so it can be moved to shelter but it is not a delicate plant, so the container needs to be large, over 5 gallons. It also works to plant it in the soil and then dig it up in the winter to move it into the greenhouse or other shelter.

Chives are a cool weather herb. The stems are used to provide a light onion taste to dishes. The stems can be chopped or used as longer pieces as a garnish. They can be grown by seed or by dividing the clumps. The plants survive the summer but not much growth occurs, and the stems are not as tender, so it is more difficult to use them in dishes. Chives grow well in containers as small as one gallon or in raised beds or even native soil. They do best if they are well fertilized with osmocote or soluble fertilizer in the irrigation water.

Chives are not usually bothered by insects or diseases but if Bermuda grass or other grassy weeds become incorporated in the clump the chives are harder to use.

Thyme is a summer herb with an exceedingly long history of use in medicines and cooking. It is even used as a groundcover to grow in the spaces between stones in patios and rock gardens. There are hundreds of selections with the English and French versions being the main categories. The English thyme has small pointed green leaves and is winter hardy. The French version is woodier and upright with grayish leaves. It is not winter hardy. Lemon thyme is gaining popularity because of the taste and fragrance. It also has larger, rounded, more attractive leaves than the French or English selections.

Thyme is grown by seed and can be started by stem or root cuttings. Many selections can be purchased as transplants from your favorite nursery or even from internet sources. For your herb garden it is an attractive and easy to use arrangement if you have each of your 5 or 6 favorite thyme in a separate 1- or 2-gallon container. If you use more of one or another of the selections in your beef, poultry, or salad dishes keep larger or more containers of that selection.

French tarragon is one of the most valuable and expensive herbs. It has a light licorice flavor that is a key ingredient in French sauces such as hollandaise and bearnaise. It is also used for herb vinegars and in gourmet fish, egg, poultry, and vegetable dishes. French tarragon is difficult to grow and harvest. It requires a winter cold period so does not grow in the San Antonio area. Mint marigold does grow in San

Antonio and a few sources say that the attractive deer-proof licorice flavored plant can replace French tarragon in some of the recipes. Let me know if anyone has used mint marigold to replace French tarragon.