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GARDENING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Herbs for All Seasons

Time: 70 Minutes

Learn how to grow indoor herbs successfully with a few simple steps. Herbs add fresh flavor to your meals and may help you reduce your sodium intake. Create an indoor herb garden to harvest the benefits and enjoy the aromas all year long.

OBJECTIVES:

List three of the easiest herbs to grow indoors.

Identify the supplies you need to grow indoor herbs.

Demonstrate how to plant and care for an herb seedling so it will thrive indoors.

Explain why herbs can help you reduce your sodium intake.

SETUP

- Review the resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- Set up the table for the planting demo. Display the optional plants if desired.
- Set up the stations for participants with the necessary activity supplies.
- Provide computer, internet access, and projector, if available.

INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).

DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Demonstrate content (see demo script). Play video as indicated.

ACTIVITY (40 Minutes)

- Participants will watch a demonstration of how to plant and care for an herb seedling indoors. Participants will cook Minted Sugar Snap Peas.

RECAP (5 Minutes)

- Pass out the handout(s) and go through them together. Participants will taste the Minted Sugar Snap Peas during the recap.

GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (5 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).
- Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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Herbs for All Seasons Resource List

HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or heart.org/healthyforgood

- Video – [Minted Sugar Snap Peas](#)
- Video – [How to Freeze Your Fresh Herbs](#)
- Article – [How to Use Fresh Herbs](#)
- Article – [Tis the Seasonings](#)
- Infographic – [The Effects of Too Much Sodium](#)

Find these resources in this lesson:

- Recipe – [Minted Sugar Snap Peas](#)
- Handout – [Fresh Herb Pairings](#)
- Handout – [Favorite Herbs for Indoor Gardens](#)
- Infographic – [The Effects of Too Much Sodium](#)
- Handout – [Setting SMART Goals](#)

SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Table for herb-planting demo
- Stations for cooking Minted Sugar Snap Peas
- Computer, internet access, and projector, if available

ACTIVITY SUPPLIES*

- 1 teaspoon olive oil (extra virgin preferred)
- 1 small carrot, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 8 ounces sugar snap peas
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Medium skillet
- Large spoon (for stirring while cooking)
- Plates (for serving the peas)

Planting materials

- Herb seedling of your choice
- Small clay pot with drainage hole
- Sterilized potting soil
- Small pebbles or gravel
- Saucer or plate to put under the pot
- Watering can
- Spray bottle (for misting the air around your indoor herb garden)
- Grow light (optional – for display)

DEMO (OPTIONAL)**

- Mint seedling planted in a small clay pot
- Basil seedling planted in a small clay pot
- Rosemary seedling planted in a small clay pot
- Parsley seedling planted in a small clay pot
- Oregano seedling planted in a small clay pot
- Thyme seedling planted in a small clay pot

*The recipe serves 4. Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants.

**If you aren't able to bring potted seedlings, bring a small sample of each herb.

Herbs for All Seasons Demo Script



SAY:

Today we'll talk about how to plant and care for indoor herbs. We'll touch on six different types that can thrive on your kitchen windowsill, or anywhere else you have space and a moderate amount of light. Fresh herbs are a healthy choice to add flavor to all kinds of dishes. You don't have to sprinkle salt on your vegetables or pour a salty condiment into your stew. Go green instead! Think of all the herbal options you can have for creative seasoning. When you grow herbs indoors, you have them at your fingertips year-round. You can prune your plants and freeze extra leaves as well. We'll talk about how to do that. Plus, indoor herbs add a gentle fragrance and freshness to the air. Indoor greenery is attractive and, for some, can lift their spirits. Do you have a favorite herb? **(Wait for the participants to respond and react to their descriptions.)**



SAY:

To begin, let's discuss six herbs that are good choices for your indoor garden.



Mint

Mint comes in so many varieties: peppermint, spearmint, chocolate, apple, orange and even banana. Mint leaves are oval with slightly ragged edges. Their surface has lots of texture and is somewhat "fuzzy." The stem is boxy. When mint flowers, the blossoms are tiny and lavender in color. This herb is hardy. It grows fast and the stems trail gracefully. Mint sprigs are a pretty and aromatic garnish. Use mint to make:

- Unsweetened iced tea
- Salads
- Mixed fruit bowls
- Chicken dishes (popular combo for Indian cuisine)
- Side dishes with peas
- Desserts

(Show the mint. Pass it around.)



Basil

Basil is useful and easy to maintain. There are many types. Sweet or Genovese is the most common. Its flavor is faintly like licorice. There's also Thai, lemon, cinnamon and "Dark Opal," which has purple leaves. The lemon and cinnamon have aromas and flavors that go with their names.



Basil has fuller leaves that come to a point and curl under. For an attractive garnish, roll the leaves up tightly and then cut them crosswise into very thin slices to create what's called a chiffonade. Use basil to make:

- Tomato soup
- Caprese salad
- Fish and chicken dishes
- Pastas
- Omelets
- Pesto

(Show the basil. Pass it around.)



Rosemary

Rosemary has silvery-green, needle-thin leaves that grow in clumps on a woody stalk. Rosemary does well in warmer temperatures. Keep it farther from the window in the wintertime. It's a challenge to grow rosemary from seeds, so save yourself some trouble and start with seedlings. Rosemary is best used in small amounts because it adds big flavor. The tough stems can serve as skewers to grill cubes of chicken and beef and vegetable kebabs. Use rosemary to make:

- Roast chicken
- Meat dishes
- Roasted potatoes
- White bean stew
- Braised cabbage
- Whole-grain breads

(Show the rosemary. Pass it around.)

Herbs for All Seasons Demo Script (continued)

Parsley

Parsley has two varieties: the French curly and the Italian flat-leaf. Italian parsley is more flavorful. The leaves of curly parsley are tighter. The stem looks as if it has small groups of trees growing on it. The Italian, or flat-leaf, has larger lacy-looking leaves. Parsley is a very practical herb. You can use it to brighten the flavor profile of anything from a holiday roast to a simple green salad. Bonus: it makes an attractive garnish for all sorts of dishes. Use parsley to make:

- Soups
- Tabbouleh (Middle Eastern salad)
- Seafood dishes
- Side dishes with carrots
- Red potatoes with garlic and parsley
- Chimichurri sauce (Argentinian condiment for beef)

(Show the parsley. Pass it around.)

Oregano

Oregano has thin, oval leaves that are a lighter green. It's widely used in Italian cuisine. For Greek foods, such as kebabs, it's often combined with fresh lemon juice and olive oil to make a sauce. You may have heard of Mexican oregano, a special type, which has a stronger flavor. Sprinkle some fresh oregano on your thin-crust pizza! Use oregano to make:

- Greek salad
- Greek lemon chicken
- Roasted potatoes
- Sautéed mushrooms
- Vegetarian cassoulet (French bean stew)
- Grilled or baked tomatoes

(Show the oregano. Pass it around.)

Thyme

It has tiny pointed leaves that grow in layered groups on the long stem. Thyme gives foods a light and lemony boost. There's even a variety called lemon thyme. Thyme is one of the key ingredients in herbes de Provence, a French herb blend used in cooking. Use thyme to make:

- Chicken dishes
- Poultry stuffing

- Soups and stews
- Vegetable medleys
- Apple slices baked with thyme
- Succotash

(Show the thyme. Pass it around.)

How to Freeze Herbs

If you don't have an immediate use for your fresh herbs, freeze them. Freeze your favorite soup herbs in water or low-sodium broth. If you roast or stir-fry with herbs, freezing them in a light oil works well. Place the chopped herbs in the wells of an ice tray. Top off the wells with a neutral oil like canola or light olive oil. Then place the trays in the freezer overnight. Another great way to freeze herbs is to make an oil-based paste. Place the whole leaves in the food processor. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of oil. Process until they're finely chopped. Then transfer the paste to an ice cube tray and freeze overnight. Once frozen, transfer the cubes to a resealable plastic freezer bag for long-term storage – up to one year. Make sure to store them flat. Now you can enjoy fresh herbs in your cooking all winter long.

What are the Benefits of Growing Indoor Herbs?

Fresh herbs are a wholesome, natural way to add flavor to your cooking. They can help you skip the sodium. A diet that's high in sodium isn't good for your health and may raise your risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. It's important to avoid adding salt when you cook. Use fresh herbs instead. Of course, dried herbs serve the same purpose. The dried form of an herb is more concentrated. Use 1 teaspoon of the dried herb for every 1 tablespoon of the fresh. Your heart will thank you. Here are some other benefits of growing indoor herbs:

- You won't have the waste that can often come with buying expensive packaged herbs.
- You'll have fresh herbs at your fingertips all year long.
- Indoor greenery beautifies your home and the herbs add a gentle fragrance to the air.

Herbs for All Seasons Demo Script (continued)

Invite participants to move their chairs around the demo table so they can have a clear view of the planting demonstration.



SAY:

Today, I'll show you how to plant an herb seedling to grow indoors. You'll enjoy having an indoor herb garden. Start out by planting each seedling. Here's what you need:

- Clay pots with a drainage hole.
- Sterilized potting soil, which has been treated with heat or chemicals to destroy weed seeds and microorganisms that might carry disease. You can buy this soil at most nurseries or gardening stores. Add some sand for herbs like rosemary and thyme that prefer sandier soil.
- Small pebbles or gravel.
- A saucer to put under the pot.
- Adequate light (natural sunlight or you can buy a grow light at your garden store).
- A warm area in your home.
- A spray bottle (for misting the air around your indoor herb garden).



1. It's easiest to start your indoor herb garden with seedlings. These are plants that have grown from seeds for about eight to twelve weeks. Some herbs, like rosemary, are difficult to grow from seeds unless you're gifted with what people call a "green thumb." Here's my seedling. **(Show the plant.)**



2. It's preferable to use clay pots because any excess water can seep through the porous clay surface. Plastic pots trap the water in the soil and can keep the plants too wet. Too much water can harm your plants. **(Show the pot.)** However, if your only options are plastic, ceramic or glass pots, it's even more important to add a layer of pebbles or gravel as I'll show you in the next step. That layer helps with drainage and airflow through the soil. Be extra careful about overwatering if you use plastic, ceramic or glass pots.



3. Add a layer of small pebbles or gravel at the bottom of the pot. These keep the potting soil from leaking out through the drainage hole when you water. This layer also promotes drainage and airflow through the soil. **(Demo adding the pebbles or gravel to the pot.)**



4. Next, fill the pot about halfway with the potting soil. Place your seedling in the pot. Gently pack the soil around it. Leave about 1 inch of room at the top of the pot. If your pot doesn't have a drainage tray, place it on a saucer before you water the herb well. **(Demo planting and watering the seedling.)**



5. Put your newly planted herb in a sunny area. Herbs like temperatures between 60°F and 70°F. The kitchen windowsill is a good spot if you have 5 to 6 hours of sunlight a day. If you don't have sunlight, a LED grow light will work. Keep it at least 6 inches above the herbs. Leave it on for about 10-12 hours a day.

- Allow the soil to dry before you water the plant again. Herbs don't do well with water pooling around their roots. Be careful about overwatering. Too much water can harm or even kill the plant.
- Prune your herbs frequently to help them grow. Pinch or clip the leaves and stems. Treat the soil with an organic, water-soluble fertilizer (about every two weeks). You can find this fertilizer at most gardening stores. Be careful not to get fertilizer on the leaves because it burns them. It's also good to keep the air moist around your indoor herb garden. A spray bottle works well.

Herbs for All Seasons Activity Script

Divide participants into two teams to prepare the Minted Sugar Snap Peas. Invite group members to pick up their resources (recipe, ingredients and cooking supplies) at the demo station. (Alternatively, if you have set everything up at their stations beforehand, participants can go straight to their cooking stations.)



SAY:

We're going to use fresh mint to prepare Minted Sugar Snap Peas. Once we've finished cooking them, we'll enjoy them together.

Optional: Play [video](#) to give participants a sneak peek.

Minted Sugar Snap Peas

Makes 4 servings; ½ cup per serving
Per serving: 40 Calories; 0.0 g Saturated Fat; 157 mg Sodium



This minty and slightly crunchy vegetable side will bring a touch of freshness to any meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon olive oil (extra virgin preferred)
- 1 small carrot, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 8 ounces sugar snap peas
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the carrot for 1 to 2 minutes, or until tender-crisp, stirring occasionally.
2. Stir in the peas. Cook for 30 seconds, or until tender-crisp, stirring occasionally.
3. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Cook for 10 to 15 seconds, or until the mint has wilted.

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ENTRÉES

- **Pasta and Grains** – Basil, chervil, thyme
- **Poultry** – Basil, bay leaf, marjoram, parsley, rosemary, saffron, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme
- **Seafood** – Basil, bay leaf, dill, marjoram, mint, parsley, sage, tarragon, thyme
- **Beef** – Bay leaf, marjoram, rosemary, sage, thyme

SALADS

- Basil, chervil, dill, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, watercress

SOUPS

- Oregano, parsley

VEGETABLES

- **Asparagus** – Dill, parsley, tarragon
- **Beets** – Fennel, savory
- **Carrots** – Mint, parsley, sage, tarragon
- **Corn** – Marjoram, parsley, thyme
- **Cucumbers** – Chives, dill, mint
- **Dried Beans** – Mint, savory, tarragon, thyme
- **Green Beans** – Dill, marjoram, parsley
- **Peas** – Mint, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory
- **Potatoes** – Chives, dill, parsley
- **Spinach** – Rosemary
- **Squash** – Savory, parsley
- **Tomatoes** – Basil, marjoram, oregano, parsley, sage, savory, tarragon, thyme

BREADS

- Chives, marjoram, oregano, rosemary

DESSERTS

- Basil, mint



Favorite Herbs for Indoor Gardens



MINT

- **Fresh Fact:** Mint comes in many varieties: peppermint, spearmint, chocolate, apple, orange and even banana.
- **Light:** Moderate to strong light.
- **Water:** Keep the soil lightly moist. Water soon if the soil is dry.
- **Uses:** Unsweetened iced tea, salads, mixed fruit bowls, chicken dishes (popular combo for Indian cuisine), side dishes with peas and desserts.



BASIL

- **Fresh Fact:** Basil also comes in many varieties: Sweet or Genovese is the most common. There's also Thai, lemon, cinnamon and "Dark Opal," which has purple leaves.
- **Light:** Moderate to strong light.
- **Water:** Keep the soil lightly moist. Water soon if the soil is dry.
- **Uses:** Tomato soup, caprese salad, fish and chicken dishes, pastas, omelets and pesto.



ROSEMARY

- **Fresh Fact:** Rosemary is hard to grow from seeds. It likes sandy soil.
- **Light:** Lots of light and warmth.
- **Water:** Let the top of the soil dry out before watering.
- **Uses:** Roast chicken, meat dishes, roasted potatoes, braised cabbage, green beans and whole-grain breads.



PARSLEY

- **Fresh Fact:** Parsley comes in two varieties: French or curly and Italian or flat-leaf. The Italian is more flavorful.
- **Light:** Lots of light, but does fine with partial sunlight.
- **Water:** Keep the soil lightly moist.
- **Uses:** Soups, tabbouleh (Middle Eastern salad), seafood dishes, side dishes with carrots, red potatoes with garlic and parsley and chimichurri sauce (Argentinian condiment for beef).



THYME

- **Fresh Fact:** Thyme gives foods a light, lemony boost. There's even a variety called lemon thyme.
- **Light:** Thrives in a warm, sunny window.
- **Water:** Wait until the top of the soil is dry to water, but don't let the plant wilt.
- **Uses:** Chicken dishes, poultry stuffing, soups and stews, vegetable medleys, apple slices baked with thyme and succotash.



OREGANO

- **Fresh Fact:** Oregano is widely used in Italian and Greek cuisine.
- **Light:** Thrives in a warm, sunny window.
- **Water:** Wait until the top of the soil is dry to water it, but don't let the plant wilt.
- **Uses:** Greek salad, Greek lemon chicken, roasted potatoes, sautéed mushrooms, vegetarian cassoulet (French bean stew) and grilled or baked tomatoes.

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HOW TOO MUCH SODIUM AFFECTS YOUR Health

9 out of 10 Americans consume too much sodium.



WHERE DOES SODIUM COME FROM?



3,400 milligrams
amount of sodium an American consumes on average in a day

1,500 milligrams or less
recommended by the AHA for ideal heart health

Shake OUT Salt

Keep your sodium intake in check as part of an overall heart-healthy eating pattern that emphasizes:

- Variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Low-fat dairy products
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Nuts and legumes
- Non-tropical vegetable oils
- Limiting saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, red meat, sweets and sugary drinks

Your HEALTH

Excess levels of sodium/salt may put you at **RISK** for:

ENLARGED HEART MUSCLE	HEART FAILURE
HEADACHES	HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
KIDNEY DISEASE	KIDNEY STONES
OSTEOPOROSIS	STOMACH CANCER
STROKE	

Excess levels of sodium/salt may **CAUSE**:

INCREASED WATER RETENTION THAT LEADS TO:

- Puffiness
- Bloating
- Weight gain



heart.org/sodium

SPECIFIC

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

MEASURABLE

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

ACHIEVABLE

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

REALISTIC

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal?
If not, how can you get them?

TIME-BOUND

- When will your goal be achieved?

EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:
