

Spring is a Good Time to Begin Herb Gardening



Sarah Browning
UNL Extension Educator

Planting herbs in the spring is a good way to enjoy fresh seasonings throughout the year. Herbs should be planted after the last day of frost in the spring to avoid losing plants to a late freeze. If planting for the first time, it might be better to start with transplants, rather than just seeds.

When selecting herbs be sure they're meant for culinary uses, not just as an ornamental herb. Some ornamental herbs



have a less desirable flavor because they have been bred for appearance rather than taste.

Popular fresh garden herbs include basil, chives, cilantro, dill, mint and parsley. Herbs such as French tarragon, oregano, rosemary, thyme and sage are good in both fresh and dried forms.

If planting mint, it is best to plant it differently from other herbs. Mint is an aggressive plant that can quickly take over the herb garden. Plant it in a 1 or 2 gallon container that is at least 12 inches wide and without holes. Bury the



container in the ground so an inch of the container is above ground level. This will contain the plant so it can't creep out the top or the bottom and will prevent it from spreading throughout the garden. Mint planted in this fashion may need to be watered more than other herbs that can send their roots farther into the ground because they are planted normally.

Many herbs also are suitable for container gardening and might be a good option if limited on space.

Arbor Day and Tree Planting are Nebraska Traditions

Dennis Adams
UNL Forestry Specialist

Early explorers called Nebraska the "Great American Desert" and doubted any settler could support his or her family here. Often, the first sod broken in Nebraska was to plant trees. Trees were valued for their protection and beauty, and fragile seedlings were transported many miles to plant on barren Nebraska homesteads.

Julius Sterling Morton, editor of the Nebraska City newspaper in the 1800s, used his pen to advance the cause of agriculture, specifically tree planting. His active interest in tree planting gained statewide recognition in 1872 when, as

president of the State Board of Agriculture, he introduced a resolution calling for a tree-planting holiday to be known as Arbor Day.

In 1885, the Nebraska Legislature made Arbor Day a state holiday and set Morton's birthday, April 22, as the official date. On the first Arbor Day, more than 1 million trees were planted.

Today the holiday is acknowledged by every state and 12 foreign countries. Most states celebrate National Arbor Day the last Friday in April. In 1989, the Nebraska Legislature changed the date so Nebraska celebrates Arbor Day on the last Friday in April as well.

In 1873, tree planting in Nebraska picked up steam

when Burlington Railroad began a planting program along its right-of-way to provide a living snow fence. They planted more than 560,000 trees.

In 1873, the Timber Culture Act provided additional land for settlers planting trees. They would receive a quarter section of land for planting 40 acres of trees (later reduced to 10 acres) and had special advantages in claiming the land.

Due to all the laws and benefits of planting trees, Nebraska had 1 million acres of trees or about an acre of trees per resident by 1963.

Nebraska hardly is the treeless prairie it once was. Due to Morton's efforts Nebraska even became known as the "Tree Planter State."

Controlling Nuisance Weeds in Your Farm Pond

Excessive growth of aquatic plants and algae are the most frequently received complaints from farm pond managers. Controls for nuisance plants can be physical, chemical or biological. For physical control, shallow areas of the pond should be deepened by mechanical dredging and the pond sides should have 3:1 slopes. Watershed management that avoids leachate from fertilized fields, manure or sewage can help minimize algae mats and other problems.

Chemical weed control is a seasonal approach which, if

done properly, can eliminate weeds and still leave the water suitable for other uses. Mats of algae, identified by their thick, hair-like appearance, are controlled best with copper sulfate. Submerged weeds can be held in check by a number of aquatic herbicides. Your county extension agriculture educator can help you make the right choice. Emergent plants like cattails are easily killed by glyphosate herbicides labeled for aquatic use. With any herbicide pay very strict attention to the label instructions and precautions.

In the spring some

managers apply a blue dye called Aquashade, which shades out aquatic plants. It can effectively control weeds, but the shading also suppresses food production. Its use is better suited to swimming ponds than to ponds for fishing.

The last few years have seen considerable interest in the stocking of white amur, or grass carp, for weed control. Stocked at the proper rate, these non-reproducing, vegetarian fish can provide control year after year, to the point of keeping plants completely eradicated.

"Management of Small Ponds" Clinic, April 17

Is your pond turbid after a rain? Is your pond covered with a green slime in the summer months? Do rooted pond weeds and/or shoreline vegetation reduce angling access and recreation on the pond? Would you like to learn more about human and pet health risks from toxic algae?

If you answered yes any of the questions or have questions pertaining to pond management then you will want to attend the "Management of Small Ponds" clinic on Tuesday, April 17, 7-9 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln. This seminar is designed for those who have a 1/2 acre sized pond or larger.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension presents a series of programs, entitled Acreage Insights-Rural Living Clinics, targeting acreage owners and specifically designed to provide knowledge and skills to better manage a rural living environment.

Preregistration is due by April 12. Advanced registration is \$10 per person, and \$15 per person at the door. For more information or registration form, contact Don Janssen at 441-7180 or go to <http://acreage.unl.edu>



Container Gardening

John Fech
UNL Extension Educator

Finding enough space to plant a garden is a tricky task, especially in urban areas with poor soil quality. However, container gardening is becoming more popular for gardeners who enjoy home-grown flowers and produce.

Suitable containers vary from clay pots and barrels to window boxes. The key is to select a container that is sturdy and heavy enough to hold itself upright in strong winds. It should hold enough soil to support the type of plant it contains and be equipped with drainage holes to prevent excess water from suffocating the plant.

Soilless potting mixes work best for container gardening. These mixes have good drainage and contain adequate moisture and air space for root development. They are also free of disease, insects and weeds that may be present in regular garden soil.

A wide variety of plants can be grown in containers, especially since many seed catalogs now offer bush and patio varieties. Crops such as cucumbers, squash and

tomatoes are excellent choices, along with salad crops such as leaf lettuce, radishes and green onions.

When determining what types of plants to grow, take the amount of available sunlight into consideration. Plants that bear fruit, such as peppers, herbs and sun-loving flowers such as geraniums and petunias need at least six hours of full sun each day. Leafy vegetables and fibrous-rooted flowers such as Impatiens are better suited for shaded areas. Keeping containers on a wheeled-platform or wagon can make it easier to move plants from place to place should sunlight require them to be moved throughout the day.

All plants need adequate soil moisture. It is especially important to monitor moisture on warm, windy days when soil is most likely to dry out. If a container garden is located on an apartment balcony above another resident's balcony or patio, be sure to place containers on some type of plate to catch the water that drains through.

Fertilizers should be applied according to label directions and individual plant needs.