

## 2019 Herb of the Year

*Agastache ssp.*, Anise hyssop, has been named 2019 Herb of the Year by the International Herb Association. The Anise hyssop plant is a perennial with blue flowers and fragrant foliage. It is a member of the mint family and native to North America. Plant it in full sun and provide good drainage. This plant grows 24–36 inches tall and can spread 18–24 inches. Pollinators — like bees and butterflies — enjoy the pollen and nectar from the plentiful and long-blooming flowers.

—By Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate, Lancaster Co.



*Agastache ssp.*, Anise hyssop

### Composting Demonstrations

Compost has many benefits when used in the home landscape — it provides nutrients, increases the water-holding capacity of sandy soil and improves aeration of clay soil. Plus, making your own is a great way to recycle garden waste.

Learn how to be successful with composting by attending a free composting demonstration sponsored by Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln Recycling Office. Composting Demonstrations are presented at the Pioneers Park Nature Center's backyard composting demonstration area across the street from the Nature Center (look for the Extension banner). Demonstrations will be held at 10 a.m. on the following Saturdays: May 18, June 22, Sept. 21 and Oct. 12.

Demonstrations are presented by Extension Master Gardeners. You will see three types of composting bins and how to use them. At each composting program, two lucky participants will win either a composting thermometer or a composting bin.



## GARDEN GUIDE

### THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate, Lancaster Co.

In May, set out marigold, petunia, ageratum and begonia transplants. All are good border plants.

Cabbage loopers and imported cabbage worms are green caterpillars. They eat large holes in the leaves of plants in the cabbage family. For control, caterpillars can be picked off by hand or sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*Bt*), a natural, non-toxic preparation available by various trade names.

To grow annuals in containers on the patio, use a light weight soil mixture. Keep the plants well watered, because the soil dries out fast. Apply a water soluble fertilizer according to package directions every two weeks.

Lawns maintained at the correct height are less likely to have disease and weed infestation. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue should be mowed at approximately three inches in height. Mow frequently, removing no more than one third of the blade at each cutting.

Watering roses with soaker hoses or drip irrigation will reduce the spread of black spot disease.

Plant ground covers under shade trees that do not allow enough sunlight to grow grass. Vinca minor or English ivy are ground cover plants that grow well in shade.

Plan a landscaping project on paper first. Do not over plant. Be sure you know the mature size of each plant and allow for growth.

Harvest rhubarb by cutting or by grasping the stalk and pulling up gently to one side.

Grass clippings can be used as a mulch in flower beds and vegetable gardens if allowed to dry well before use. Never use clippings from a lawn that has been treated with a herbicide.

Mulch around newly planted trees and shrubs. This practice reduces weeds, controls fluctuations in soil temperature, retains moisture, prevents damage from lawn mowers and looks attractive.

## Children and Mindful Eating

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Recently, my brothers (with their families), my parents and my family were together celebrating my dad's birthday. Food is usually part of the picture as we all need to eat. It is so fun to get together, let the kids play and enjoy my brother's impeccable ability for grilling. Typically, we each bring something to share with the larger group. I am a big fan of dessert, so I often like to bring that, but I also love fruits and veggies, so sometimes that is my responsibility. On this particular occasion, I was responsible for providing the vegetables.

I was running short on time, so I went for the quick option (although a bit on the pricey side) and grabbed a veggie tray with ranch dip from one of the local grocery stores. You can get a lot more veggies for your money if you have time to wash and cut the items yourself, but sometimes time is not an option.

I have lots of nieces whom I do not see often enough and the littlest one is Kinsley. Kinsley will turn three this November. She is currently in my favorite stage of early childhood — toddler. The world is all on her own terms, she knows what she wants when she wants it, and she often gets what she wants because, frankly, she is adorable.

Kinsley told us she was hungry. I showed her the veggie tray and asked her if she wanted any of those options. She shook her adorable blonde head in the “yes” motion, looked at me with her beautiful blue eyes and asked to “sit up there” on the counter next to the tray of veggies. I picked her up and sat her right next to the tray and she selected one of the cherry tomatoes, carefully looked it over in her hand and then dipped it gently into the dip covering about one-third of the

tomato in ranch. I was impressed by her fine motor skills in that she didn't get any ranch on her fingers! Next she carefully brought the tomato up to her mouth and bit off the end. I remember she closed her eyes and said, “mmmmmm.” She chewed it up and took two more bites of that tomato before asking for more.

She impressed me that evening with her willingness to eat every different kind of veggie on that veggie tray. Broccoli, cauliflower, cucumbers and carrots — each found a way into her mouth. Impressive that she would choose to enjoy each and every kind of vegetable on the tray, but even better was the way in which she enjoyed them.

### What Do Children Need From Adults for Meal Time?

Children birth to 5 years are typically born with the ability to regulate their food intake to meet their body's needs. This means they understand when they are hungry and when they are full. As a parent or caregiver responsible for feeding children, we need to provide them with three things.

- Healthy **food** options.
- The **time** to consume the food.
- A safe **space** to eat the food.

The child needs to decide if they are going to eat and how much. Pressuring children to eat all of the food on their plate, and even rewarding children for doing so, should not be common practice. Instead, as adults caring for young children, we can model our own enjoyment of eating different foods. Sitting with children during mealtimes and talking about what we are eating helps children to think and learn about the different foods.

Children practice their social skills when they say “please and thank you,” and participate in conversations with their peers to support their language skills. They are learning math skills such

as fractions (“1/2 of your plate is fruits and veggies”) and addition (“please take 3 chicken nuggets”). In addition to learning and development, children and adults can participate in mindful eating.

### What is Mindful Eating?

Mindful eating is the practice of paying attention in the present moment, without judgment and with curiosity, when choosing, preparing and eating food (Pierson, S., et. Al, 2016). When you practice mindful eating, you are choosing to experience food, one bite at a time — much like Kinsley experienced that first cherry tomato. You experience it by being present in the moment, being intentional with each bite and aware of the foods taste, texture, smell and even the feeling eating the food gives you.

Adults engaging in mindful eating will begin to recognize their hunger and fullness cues, identify what triggers them to eat (sadness, boredom) and helps them to identify more effective ways to manage those feelings.

Adults can help children look for their hunger and fullness cues by asking them to think about their bellies (and even ask the child to put a hand on his/her own belly) and notice if their belly is hungry or full? Adults should invite children to choose a variety of foods, help prepare meals and eat together. When adults engage in mindful eating with children, children learn that sugary foods are not bad for them; instead, they learn how to consume these foods in healthy ways and with healthy portions.

### SAGE – Savoring, Active Contribution, Gratitude, Education

One strategy that can be helpful in practicing mindful eating for both you and the children you care for is the SAGE

mindful eating approach. The SAGE approach was developed by Helen Maffini with MindBe Education.

**S – Savoring:** Model healthy eating with curiosity. “This soup is creamy and smooth, it is warm in my belly.”

**A – Active contribution:** Invite children to wash and cut up fruits and veggies. Grow food in container gardens in your home or classroom, or if available, plant a garden with children outside. Research supports increasing children's likelihood of trying and eating foods when they are asked to help prepare and grow these foods.

**G – Gratitude:** Teach children where our food comes from and model being thankful for our food. “Thank you to the cow who provided us with this milk.” “I appreciate the farmer who planted these beans.” “I am thankful for our cook who prepared this lunch.”

**E – Education:** Learn about nutritional qualities of food and bring awareness to yourself about why we eat certain foods.

Sources:

- Pierson, S., Goto, K., Giampaoli, J., Wylie, A., Seipel, B., & Buffardi, K. (2016). *The development of a mindful-eating intervention program among third through fifth grade elementary school children and their parents.* Journal of Health Promotion, 14, 3, 70–76.
- Helen Maffini with MindBe Education, <https://mindbe-education.com/mindful-eating-with-children>, retrieved March 29, 2019.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture's Choose MyPlate has resources for providing balanced foods and ideas for engaging children in healthy eating practices at [www.choosemyplate.gov/children](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/children)