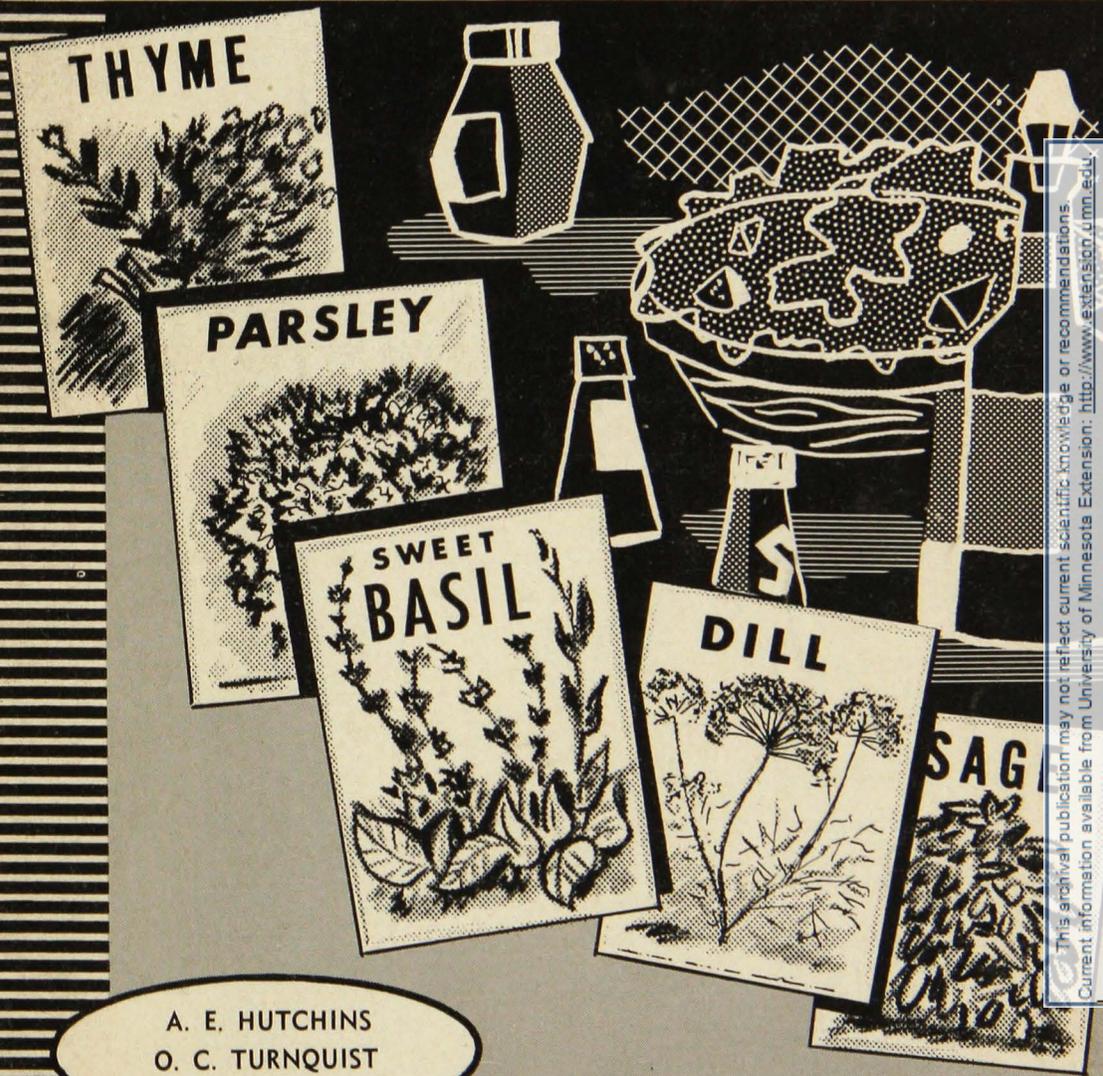


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Culinary Herbs



A. E. HUTCHINS
O. C. TURNQUIST

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Agricultural Extension Service
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Culinary Herbs

A. E. Hutchins and O. C. Turnquist

CULINARY HERBS, which had an important place in the gardens of our ancestors, are now receiving increased attention and popularity. Many inquiries are received in regard to their habits, uses, and culture, and it is the purpose of this bulletin to answer briefly some of the questions most frequently asked. Those who cannot find time to plant and care for a real herb garden can at least become familiar with and enjoy some of the more pleasing and attractive herbs by planting a few in the flower and vegetable garden.

What Is An Herb?

From the standpoint of the practical gardener, herbs may be defined as those plants which, because of their aromatic and healing properties, are useful for medicinal, perfuming, or flavoring purposes and which, in some cases, may have a definite ornamental value as well.

Thus herbs may be classified, according to their uses, as medicinal, culinary, aromatic, and ornamental. Some herbs may have two or more of these uses. This bulletin deals primarily with the culinary or cooking herbs.

Culinary Value

It is to be regretted that herbs do not play a more important part in American cookery, because their use opens the way to the preparation of an infinite number of distinctive and appetizing dishes. Herbs can make

insipid dishes most appealing; can give a delightful cooling and stimulating flavor to drinks; can give a new and distinctive flavor to warmed-over dishes, and, in many other ways, can aid the housewife in banishing monotony from her menus.

Owing to their pungent distinctive flavors, herbs are used only in small quantities to lend flavor or aroma to the culinary product. Therefore, only a few plants are needed.

Culture in General

Fortunately for the gardener, most herbs are easy to grow. Though they are able to take care of themselves and survive under adverse conditions, almost like weeds, they will be most attractive and give the best results if properly planted and cared for.

Herbs do best in a sunny location. Partial shade may produce a more lux-

uriant growth, but lots of sunshine is needed to make most herbs rich in the volatile oils responsible for the odors and flavors. For this reason, a west, south, or southwest slope is preferable.

Any good garden soil will prove satisfactory for most herbs, although many of them seem to prefer a rather meager, poor soil. If the soil is too rich, their growth is often rank and the oils poor in quality. Only a few herbs, particularly those frequently cut, such as parsley, chives, and basil, require applications of manure or other plant foods. Water-loving herbs, such as the mints, cress, lovage, pennyroyal, and angelica, should have a fairly moist location. Most other herbs do best on a rather dry, well-drained soil.

The soil should be well prepared before planting. Loosening the soil to a depth of from 18 inches to 2 feet aids in deep penetration of the roots. However, if the herbs are planted in the vegetable garden, fair results can be obtained by the usual plowing. All clods should be well broken up. The surface should be very finely pulverized, especially if seeds are used instead of transplants.

Herbs require little attention after they have once become established. Cultivate only often enough to kill the weeds and provide a fine dust mulch. Except for the moisture-loving herbs mentioned above, watering is necessary only in periods of fairly severe drouth. In general, herbs are remarkably free from insects and diseases. Only a few need fertilizing.

Tarragon, chives, pennyroyal, and the mints are always propagated by cuttings or divisions. Practically all the other herbs may be propagated from seed. It is usually well to sow early in flats or shallow boxes, transplant into

pots or flats when the plants are small, and set in the garden as soon as outdoor growing conditions are favorable. This also provides a longer growing season. Sow shallow in the flats and cover lightly with finely pulverized soil or sand. When herbs are seeded directly in the field, radishes are often sown along with them to mark the row until the herbs come up.

Most perennial herbs can be propagated by cuttings of the roots or tops. Top cuttings, a few inches long, usually root readily if placed in moist, shaded, light soil. As soon as they start growing, they may be transplanted to the garden. Plants may be taken up in the fall, kept in the house or greenhouse during the winter, and cuttings made early enough in the spring so that they will be well rooted and ready for setting in the garden as soon as the conditions are favorable. To be most successful, hardy perennial herbs should be lifted and transplanted every three or four years. If this cannot be done, a top dressing of rich soil each fall will help keep them healthy and vigorous.

Such herbs as sage, thyme, and savory are often propagated by means of layers. Selected branches, still connected with the plant, are laid on the ground, pegged down, and the joints covered with an inch of dirt. Under favorable growing conditions, roots will be formed in three or four weeks. Then the layered branches may be severed from the plant and planted whole or cut into as many pieces as there are rooted joints.

Mints may be divided by thrusting a sharp spade through the clump and transplanting the divided parts. Other perennial herbs may be divided in the same manner, but the plants receive

a severe check and are apt to be unsymmetrical. Chives are divided by pulling the plants apart from the clump and planting them individually. In garlic, the cloves into which the bulbs are divided are planted.

In this region, it is usually necessary to give the perennial and biennial herbs a winter covering of some material such as straw, marsh hay, or leaves.

Herbs That Should Be in Every Garden

Following are separate discussions of a few of the most popular herbs which should have a place in every garden. As already suggested, many of the herbs have ornamental uses in borders, flower gardens, and as house plants, but these uses cannot be fully discussed here.

SWEET BASIL

Sweet basil, a much-branched annual, is extremely hardy. Bush basil is a dwarf form. Start early from seed and transplant 12 inches apart in rows 18 inches apart. A light, medium-fertile, dry soil in a sunny location is best.

Basil has a clove-like flavor and the leaves and tips of the shoots are used in mock turtle soup, in stews, dressings, white sauces and milk gravies, in flavoring salads, and when dried are used for spicing sausages and roasts.

BORAGE

Borage is a coarse annual herb. Sow in the open in the spring about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep. Thin to stand about 12 to 15 inches apart. It does best on a poor,



Fig. 1. Sweet Basil

light, dry soil in a sunny location. Borage often reseeds itself.

Borage has clusters of very pretty light blue flowers which are candied, made into Borage tea, and used for flavoring drinks. The young leaves and leafy tips are used in mixed salads, for garnishing, and in beverages.

THE CHIVE

The chive, a hardy perennial, is closely related to the common onion but is of much milder flavor. To propagate, divide old clumps and set out the individual plants in fall or early spring. Chives grow in any good garden soil. A sunny location is preferred, but they do fairly well in partial shade. If cut heavily, give light application of manure or commercial fertilizer.

The green leaves of chives are used for seasoning everything from soups to cheese, with the exception of pastries and desserts. The plant is attractive with slender pencil-shaped leaves and rose-purple flowers. It is well adapted as a border or specimen plant in the perennial or rock garden, and may be used as a winter house plant.

GARDEN CRESS

Garden cress is an annual, cool-weather plant whose leaves are used in salads and for garnishing. Seed very early in rows 12 to 15 inches apart. Thin plants as needed for use. If the leaves are removed without injuring the crown, the plant will continue to bear. The leaves are ready for use in six or eight weeks after planting. Suc-

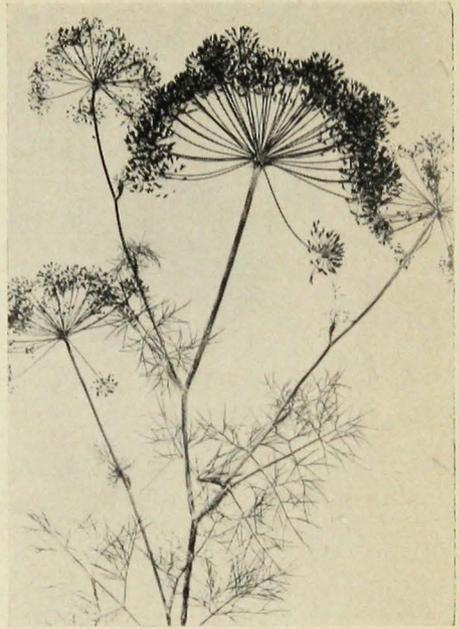


Fig. 3. Dill

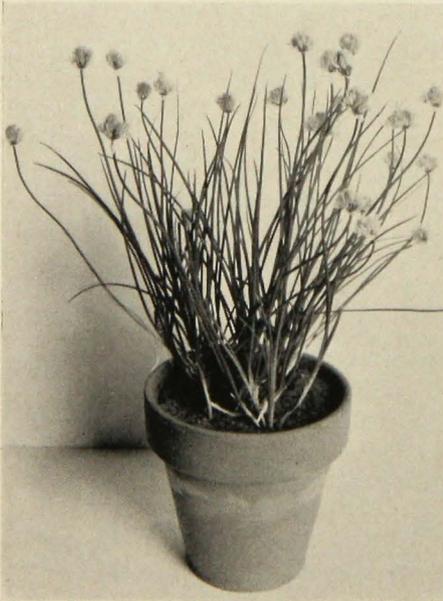


Fig. 2. Chive

cessive plantings 10 days apart insure a continuous supply until hot weather, when the plants quickly go to seed. A cool rich soil is desirable.

DILL

Dill is a hardy annual. Seed about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep early in the spring in a sunny location. If wanted for use in dill pickles, plant about two months before the cucumbers will be ready. Thin plants to stand nine inches apart in rows 18 inches apart. Dill prefers sandy soil, medium-fertile, well-drained. Add water in dry periods. The young leaves and stems of dill are often used for seasoning sauces and salads, for flavoring vinegar, and in pickles. The seeds are sometimes

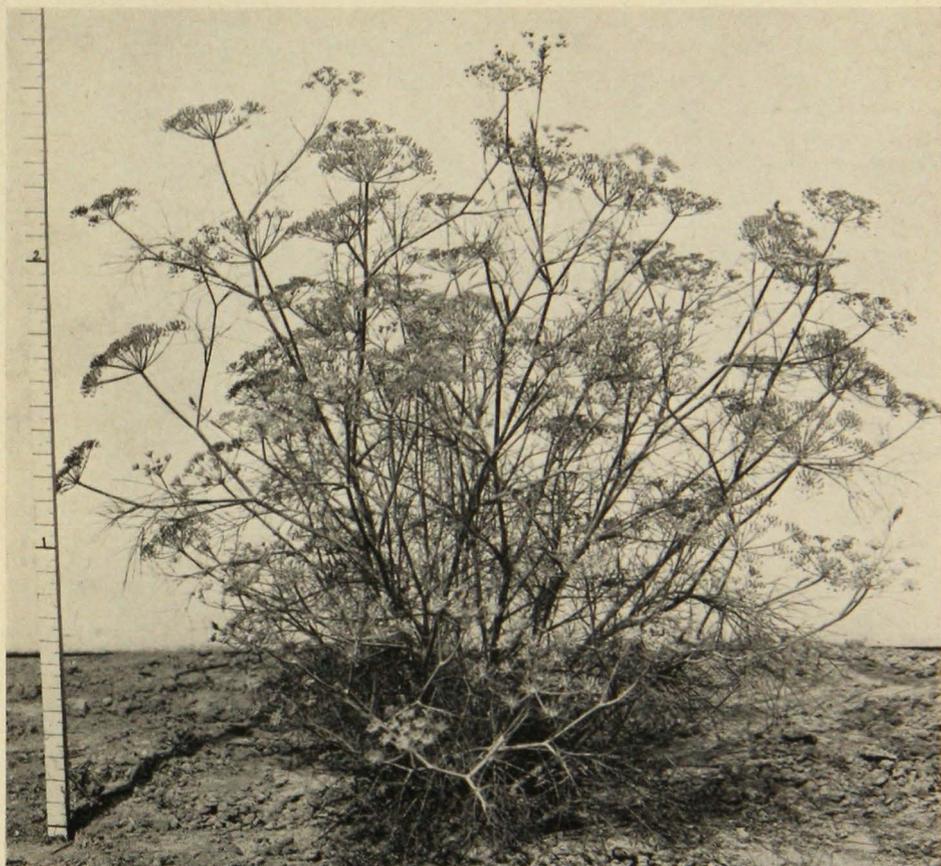


Fig. 4. Sweet Fennel

used in pastries, soups, and stews, but most often in dill pickles.

FENNEL

Fennel, a semi-hardy perennial, is cultivated as an annual. Two kinds are commonly grown in the garden—sweet fennel and Florence fennel. Sweet fennel is most popular and reaches a height of three to four feet. Florence fennel or Finocchio grows

about two feet high and has much-thickened overlapping leaf bases.

Fennel grows best on a sunny, poor to medium-fertile, well-drained soil that has plenty of lime. It is propagated from seed sown $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep in the open ground in early spring. Sweet fennel plants should be thinned to stand about 18 inches apart in rows 24 inches apart, and, if the plants are to be used like endive or celery, the flower stalks should be cut and used

when about to bloom. Florence fennel plants should be spaced 6 to 12 inches apart in the row. When the thickened overlapping leaf bases of this type form a swelling (called the "apple") about the size of an egg, a little earth should be heaped halfway up the base. Cutting can usually begin 10 days later.

Fennel has a distinctive flavor which is very attractive to many. The stems are often blanched and eaten like celery or endive. Carosella, a famous delicacy of Naples, is made from the stems of sweet fennel cut before flowering and served with an oil or vinegar sauce. The leaves are used for garnishing, also in salads, soups, and puddings, and are especially appreciated with fish dishes. Seeds are used in cakes, candies, and soups and the oil from them in liquors and soaps.



Fig. 5. Sage

Florence fennel is usually boiled and served with butter or cream sauce.

HORSERADISH

Horseradish, a hardy perennial herb, grows best in a cool, humid climate and in a deep, rich, mellow, moist soil. Root cuttings, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch across and four to eight inches long, are planted slightly slanting with the top three to four inches below the soil surface. Plant as early as possible in the spring, one foot apart in rows three feet apart, and give the bed a heavy coating of well-rotted manure.

Horseradish is used chiefly as an early spring relish or condiment for serving with meats. For this purpose, the roots are ground and preserved in vinegar and may also be mixed with mustard.

MINTS

Mints are very popular. Among the most commonly used perennial mints are: field, corn, or Japanese mint; peppermint; pennyroyal; bergamont or lemon mint; spearmint; and white woolly mint.

Mints propagate readily by cuttings or division. In general, they do best in a moist, rich loam in partial shade and are usually planted in beds. In autumn, cut the old-growth close to the ground. In spring, sift rich soil over them to give the runners a chance to root. Beds should be transplanted every three or four years. Clumps may be forced during the winter in the hotbed, greenhouse, or in boxes in the house.

The leaves and young shoots are valuable in flavoring soups, stews, sauces, jellies, and beverages. Oils,

extracted from them, are used in flavoring candy and gum, in scenting soaps, in perfumes, and in the preparation of medicine.

PARSLEY

Parsley, a biennial, usually is cultivated as an annual. The leaves are used for flavoring, garnishing, and in salads.

Parsley seed is slow to germinate. Sow about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch deep under glass and transplant the plants to the garden six inches apart in rows 12 to 18 inches apart. If seeded outdoors, some quick germinating crop, such as radishes, should be sown with them to mark the row. Parsley will do well in a sunny location on an average garden soil, moderately fertile and well drained but retentive of moisture. By using the outer leaves as needed, the plants produce throughout the season. In the fall, plants may be dug up and potted. In potting, take a considerable part of the root system with the soil surrounding it and reduce the foliage by removing a part of the outside leaves. The potted plant is then handled like any house plant.

SAGE

Sage, a perennial, is one of the most popular of our culinary herbs, the dried leaves being used chiefly for flavoring meat and poultry dressings, sausage, and cheese. As the flavor is strong, the leaves should be used sparingly.

With the exception of Holt's Mammoth variety, which must be propagated by division or cuttings, sage is usually propagated by seed. Sow outdoors early in the spring about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch deep. Thin the plants to stand about

12 to 18 inches apart. Sage prefers a rather spare, mellow, well-drained garden loam. While perennial in nature, sage is usually treated as an annual in this region.

SUMMER SAVORY

Summer savory is a small, bushy, annual with little pink or white flowers. The leaves, young shoots, and flowers are used in salads, meat and poultry dressings, meat sauces, croquettes, and stews, or cooked with fresh peas and beans. Seed is sown about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep in a sunny location in the spring. The plants are thinned to stand about 6 to 18 inches apart and grow well in an average garden soil that is poor in fertility and fairly dry. Foliage to be stored should be cut as soon as blossoms appear and should be dried in the shade.

WINTER SAVORY

Winter savory, a fairly hardy perennial, is a good ornamental plant. Though inferior in flavor to summer savory, its culinary uses and general cultural requirements are the same. It may be propagated from seed, cuttings, divisions, or layers. Since it does not transplant well, seeds are sown where the plant is to remain.

THE THYMES

The thymes are small, fairly hardy perennials, often used for edgings and rockeries. The leaves are employed for seasoning. The several cultivated forms are similar in their culinary properties, but vary somewhat in their ornamental values.

Common thyme is an erect, bushy plant about 8 to 10 inches tall, bearing

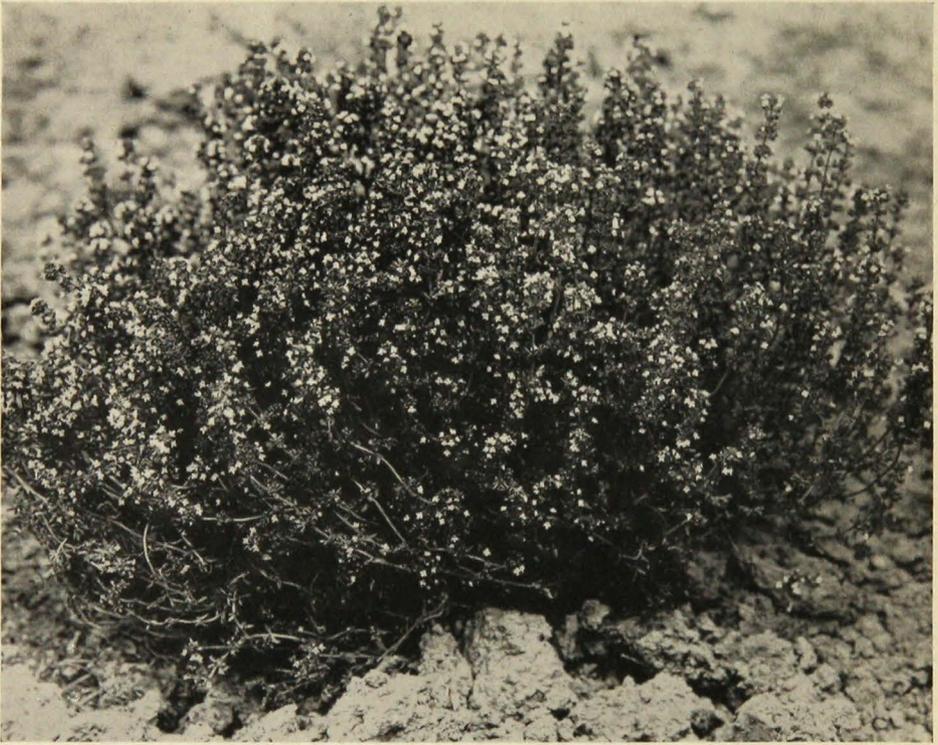


Fig. 6. Thyme

tiny grayish leaves and lavender blossoms. Mother of thyme or creeping thyme makes a perfect mat of green in the rock garden. There are several varieties of lemon-scented thyme, such as the Silver, Golden, and Variegated, all of which are useful as herbs or for the flower garden proper. The leaves of young thyme shoots, green or dried, are used for seasoning soups, meat sauces, meat and poultry stuffings, sausages, cheeses, and gravies.

Thymes are easily propagated by cuttings, divisions, layers, or seed. The seeds are very small and are merely pressed gently into the surface of the

well-pulverized seedbed and are usually sown indoors early in the spring. In early June, the plants may be transplanted to stand 6 to 12 inches apart in a sunny location. The soil should be medium-fertile, light, and fairly dry.

Harvesting, Curing, Storing

At least a few herbs should be available for winter use. Most herbs are fairly easy to store and will retain their aroma or flavor for a considerable period of time. Some kinds may be potted for winter and grown as house plants.

Foliage harvested for storage should be cut on a bright, dry day when the plants are in full growth, vigorous, and full of sap, and just before flowering. They should be cut close to the ground, tied in bunches, labeled, and hung up to dry in a cool, clean, dry, dustless, airy room, such as an attic, and dried as quickly as possible. If desired, the leaves may be stripped off and dried in trays. When dry enough to crumble, the leaves, whole or finely crumbled, may be placed in wide-mouthed bottles or fruit jars, labeled, and tightly corked or covered. Look at the jars daily for a few days and if any moisture is present, remove the herbs and dry further. Herbs must be thoroughly dry to keep well. Sweet basil, hoarhound, marjoram, sage, thyme, balm, savory, tarragon, lavender, parsley, celery, dill, fennel, and mint are the herbs whose foliage is most commonly dried.

Herbs grown for seed should be allowed to ripen and then harvested just before the seeds start dropping. Place the seeds with other attached parts on a paper or cloth to dry. As soon as they are dry enough, thresh out and remove the dirt and refuse. Then spread the clean seeds in thin layers on a cloth or paper until they are thoroughly cured. Store in glass jars. The conditions for harvesting, curing, and storing should be the same as those necessary for preserving the foliage. Among the herbs whose seeds are commonly used are angelica, anise, celery, sweet cicely, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, lovage, poppy (maw), and sesame (bene).

Herbs that may be taken up in the fall, potted, and used as house plants include bush basil, chives, pot mari-

gold, sweet annual marjoram, mints, parsley, rose geranium, rosemary, and lemon verbena.

Culinary Uses

Success in the use of culinary herbs depends largely on the cook. Many herbs are very pungent and only a small quantity should be used. Start with a very small amount, allow that to blend thoroughly with the material being prepared, and then add more if necessary to meet the individual taste. Some herbs are best when used alone. Others may be blended to give a delightful effect. This opens up a wide field for experiment by the cook.

Sage, sometimes used to season stuffings for turkey and chicken, is more generally used in dressings for pork, goose, duck, and for seasoning sausage. Parsley or fennel alone, or thyme, marjoram, and savory, alone or in combination, are best suited for veal, venison, most game, turkey, chicken, and fish. Basil and balm are often used in the same way. Horseradish sauce is very good with baked ham. Soup stocks are improved by adding sweet herbs, parsley, chives, and garlic.

Cress, parsley, and angelica are often recommended as garnishes for fish dishes. Mint sauce or jelly is almost indispensable with lamb or mutton. Mint or tarragon, sprinkled over them, add to the quality of many fruit salads. Such herbs as chervil, chives, mint, parsley, peppergrass, watercress, sorrel, and tarragon may be added to salads to give them a pungent flavor.

Many breads, rolls, cookies, cakes, drinks, candies, and pickles may be given a different appetizing quality by

the addition of some of the various seeds mentioned previously to recipes already in use.

Many beverages may be improved by the addition of a sprig or leaf of woodruff, borage, costmary, lemon

verbena, balm, mint, rose geranium, or anise. Leftover meat dishes may be improved greatly by seasoning liberally with sweet herbs. Basil is especially good for seasoning tomatoes. Many other uses are possible.

A Few Useful Recipes

OMELET WITH HERBS

A favorite French omelette is made by adding a mixture of minced parsley, thyme, and sweet marjoram to a plain omelette prepared in the usual way. Use 1 teaspoon fresh chopped herbs per egg, or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of mixed dried herbs for 4 eggs. Other herb combinations may be used, such as minced thyme, tarragon, chives, marjoram, and chervil, or minced thyme, basil, summer savory, and chives, or any of these herbs may be added singly.

FRENCH DRESSING

This dressing, prepared according to the cook's own recipe, may be varied in many ways to suit the individual taste by adding bits of parsley, horseradish, tarragon leaves, and vinegars of distinct flavor such as tarragon. The French always rub the bowl in which the dressing is made with a clove of garlic.

HERB INFUSIONS OR VINEGARS

Mint, tarragon, dill, sweet basil, sweet marjoram, and burnet are fre-

quently used as infusions. All that it is necessary to do is to pick the fresh green leaves of the herb to be used just before flowering, wash, dry slightly before the fire, fill a jar with them, cover with a good grade of vinegar, keep out of the air, allow to stand two to four weeks, strain, and bottle. Use the liquid according to its strength for flavoring. Other herbs are sometimes treated in the same way.

BREAD STUFFING

Bread stuffings can often be improved or made distinctive by mixing in thoroughly $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of thyme, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of powdered sage, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of chopped onions or chives, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of summer savory either singly or in combination. Other herbs previously mentioned as being used for this purpose may be tried in similar quantities and often give a very pleasing effect.

LEMON MINT

For each glass, squeeze the juice of one lemon over 6 or 7 crushed mint leaves. Sweeten to taste, and add chopped ice and water to fill the glass.

SEAFOOD COCKTAIL SAUCE

- ¼ cup tomato catsup
- 2 tbs. mayonnaise
- 1 tbs. lemon juice
- 2 drops Tabasco sauce
- 1 tsp. prepared horseradish
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 1 tbs. chopped celery or
- ⅛ tsp. celery salt (optional)

Combine all ingredients. Chill. Pour over shell fish such as shrimp, lobster, or crab, and serve with lemon wedges. Add 1 tbs. minced onion or 1½ tsp. minced green pepper if desired.

CANNED TOMATO JUICE COCKTAIL

- 1 pint tomato juice
- 2 tbs. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. salt
- few grains cayenne
- 1 tsp. sugar
- Few drops onion juice (optional)
- 2 tsp. each fresh or ⅛ tsp. each crushed dried tarragon and basil

Heat tomato juice and herbs; add salt, cayenne, and sugar. Allow mixture to stand for at least an hour. Add juices, strain, and serve.

HERB SANDWICH

Rounds of bread spread with chopped olives, minced lettuce and watercress, tarragon, paprika, parsley, and chives, chopped finely and mixed with butter, make delicious sandwiches.

CANDIED MINT LEAVES OR BORAGE FLOWERS

Pick large leaves of spearmint, peppermint, or the flowers of borage. Dip the dry, clean leaves or flowers in whipped white of an egg to which ½ teaspoon of water has been added. Coat immediately with granulated sugar and lay on waxed paper. Allow to dry thoroughly. These may be used immediately or will keep for a considerable time.

HERB-FLAVORED MEATS

Rub pork chops or steaks with a small amount of thyme or marjoram.

Sprinkle pork roast with caraway seeds.

Rub lamb with thyme, marjoram, or rosemary before roasting.

Use a bit of crushed thyme with veal.

Sprinkle hamburger with finely chopped dill leaves, or fresh marjoram and chives.

CABBAGE SLAW WITH DILL

Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
1 tsp. finely chopped fresh
dill or $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dill seed
1 tsp. salt

Mix with 2 quarts finely shredded cabbage just before serving.

HORSERADISH SAUCE

Whip $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of heavy cream stiff. Mix 3 tablespoons of grated horseradish, 1 tablespoon of vinegar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt, sprinkle with cayenne or pepper, and beat the mixture gradually into the whipped cream. This sauce is very good with baked ham.

HERB BUTTERS FOR VEGETABLES

Combine 2 tbsp. melted butter with any one of the following. Pour over hot cooked vegetables.

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground basil—over parsnips, turnips, peas, potatoes, beets, green beans, or corn.

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crumbled rosemary, thyme, or sage. Serve over onions, celery, lima beans, corn, peas, or snap beans.

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. dry or 1 tsp. freshly chopped mint leaves—over carrots or peas.

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. thyme or marjoram—over boiled cabbage.

CARAWAY COOKIES

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 tbsp. milk or cream
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. caraway seeds

Cream butter and sugar, add egg and milk or cream. Blend in sifted dry ingredients and seeds. Wrap in wax paper and chill. Roll out very thin on floured pastry canvas. Cut in fancy shapes, and bake on ungreased cookie sheets 8-10 minutes in a hot oven 375-400° F.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE,
ST. PAUL 1, MINNESOTA

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