

1 April 2015

Written and Compiled by
Minette Tonoli
<http://herbs.tonoli.net>

APRIL 2015 Newsletter

Inside this issue:

<u>Next meet</u>	1
<u>Thanks</u>	1
<u>AGM</u>	1
<u>In the Garden</u>	1
<u>Harvest</u>	1
<u>Preserve</u>	3
<u>Propagate: Cuttings</u>	3

Next Meet

Monday, 13 Apr,
7.30pm

Milford Primary
30 Shakespeare Rd
Milford

**Topic: Honey &
Vanilla**

Tincture making during our last meet-up:



Thanks

Thank you everyone for the wonderful feedback I've had on the newsletter. It is always encouraging to know that it is enjoyed.

AGM

The AGM was well attended. Last years committee members are standing again for 2015. Membership stays the same at \$30 per year. Pamela Wright gave a demonstration for making homemade mustards while Lynn Brown organised a workshop for making seed tapes and wild flower seed bombs.

Lorraine Booth from Counties Manukau Herb group had a Sales Table selling her homemade Natural Soaps.

In the Garden

With the milder temperatures, I've seen a renewed growth in many of my herbs, while mature plants are still flowering beautifully and some are setting seed in statuesque umbels and capsules, not to mention the seedlings sown in late summer that are now poking up their pretty bright green shoots.

Tasks: water, mulch, harvest, feed and cut back. It is also a good time to propagate by cuttings.

Harvesting



Using fresh herbs throughout the growing season is a great pleasure, and rewards all the effort put into growing and maintaining your own herb patch.

At the end of the season though, a greater task than on-demand harvesting awaits the avid herb gardener... now there are leaves and flowers to harvest for the winter store, seeds to collect, roots to dig up and ripe berries to pick.

Moon harvest

Some gardening by the moon calendars dictate best times to harvest your crops:

Below ground crops should be gathered while the moon is waxing, being nearly a full moon; while leaves and flowers for drying should be gathered while the moon is waning.

Saving seed is best during a new moon.

<http://www.moongrow.com/>

Harvesting Herbs

Leaves

Harvest the last flush of leaves of the annual herbs such as basil, coriander and dill, especially in colder areas. Best gathered earlier in the day, and before flowering or setting seed.

Coriander and Basil both make great pesto and is the perfect way to preserve your harvest of fresh herbs.

[Coriander & Chili Pesto Recipe](http://www.taste.com.au/)

(<http://www.taste.com.au/>)

- 1 ½ cups fresh coriander leaves
- 1/3 cup unsalted roasted peanuts
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 long red chilli, chopped
- 1/3 cup rice bran or vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons lime juice

Process all except the oil and lime juice in a food processor, scraping down the sides, until almost smooth. While the motor runs, add the oil in a slow thin stream until combined, stir in lime juice.



Photo By Vegan Feast Catering (Fixin's)

Herbs such oregano, marjoram, thyme, catnip, lemon balm and pineapple sage will do well with a cutting back now too and will reward you with fresh new growth.

The one third rule (not pruning more than 1/3 of the plant when

harvesting) remains for perennials such as sage and rosemary when harvesting in Autumn.

Flowers

There may still be a good harvest of calendula flowers in your garden from plants grown over summer. Used medicinally and in herbal cosmetics, Calendula is a popular herb flower.



Photo By Wildfeuer

You may also still be gathering fresh edible flowers (viola, pansy, nasturtium and borage) from your fall garden.

It has been suggested that if you harvest flowers for their medicinal qualities, e.g. Echinacea (which flowers summer to fall), it is best to gather when the buds just begin to open.



Photo By Joadl

Seed

Many herbs, particularly your annuals, now have ripe seed just begging you to collect them. A quick stroll in my garden shows

basil, rocket, coriander, mustard, dill, fennel, shiso, fenugreek, chervil, calendula, parsley, viola, marigold and sage.

Collecting seeds from your herbs is fun, and ensures that the plants grown from them are ideally suited to your garden environment. But it is not only for seed saving—gathering your own dried seeds for cooking and baking is very rewarding.

It is common practice to use brown paper bags to harvest seeds - cut mature seed heads, umbels or capsules and leave



Photo By Suburbanjubilee

in a brown paper bag to dry, or wait until most of the seeds have turned brown and cut the seed head along with some stalk and hang it upside down in a brown paper bag. I have also seen brown paper bags tied to the stalk while the seeds are ripening on the plant. Remember to label the bags with the name and the date of the seeds.

Root

Autumn is the best time to dig up roots. Angelica, Echinacea, horseradish, valerian, dandelion, burdock, yellow dock, chicory, liquorice, marshmallow, and

Propagate with Cuttings

comfrey root can all be harvested now.

If you are going to use the root for food, it is suggested that you collect before the plant tops die back, but for medicinal roots it is best to wait until the plant tops have died. It is also often advised to only dig up roots of plants in their second or third years.

Fruit

Where the herbs have berries (cape gooseberry) or fruit (chili), they are generally ripe and ready by the end of summer too. Collect as they ripen. Keep the seeds from a few to add to your seed collection.

Preserving



You can preserve your herbal bounty by either drying, freezing or layering in salt or sugar; or in butter, oils or vinegars.

Tarragon Herb Vinegar Recipe

- 2 cups good quality white wine vinegar
- 5 sprigs of Tarragon herb
- Garlic clove (optional)
- Peppercorns (optional)

Shake herbs and vinegar together in a preserving jar and leave to infuse for about 10 days. Make sure all the herbs are covered by vinegar.

Strain and discard spent herb. Decant into serving bottle and add a new sprig of tarragon for identification if required.

Note: For a more potent flavour, and quicker infusion, the vinegar can be gently heated before adding to crushed tarragon.

Herb Cuttings

While you are out and about in your herb garden harvesting and cleaning up, now is also a very good time to make semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings of many herbs.

Lemon verbena, southernwood, box, bay, English lavender, curry tree, myrtle, olive, rosemary, sage, winter savory and thymes can all be successfully propagated by making cuttings.

Propagating plants by cutting is an easy and rewarding exercise. Here's a step-by-step as I make some cuttings of my silver thyme:

Step 1—Trays and Medium

Ensure you have clean propagation trays and suitable propagation medium (sifted potting soil, river sand with some organic fertilizer added, or specialized cut-



ting and seedling mix)

Step 2—Stock

Choose your cutting material from a healthy and strong plant. Cut the stems with clean sharp secateurs, include some leaf and a growing tip. Keep moist until you are ready to process them (place in a water misted plastic bag, cover with wet newspaper or

stand in a jar of water).



Step 3—Prepare cuttings

Remove most of the lower leaves on your cutting (this is done to reduce transpiration and also to ensure the leaves don't rot on the wet medium). Cut just below a leaf node.

Step 4—Plant cuttings

You may at this point treat your cutting end with rooting hormone if you wish (not strictly necessary). Use either a commercially available one such as Ibadex, or try for a natural approach using honey, cinnamon or willow water. Gently push your cutting into your medium.



Cover your cuttings, mist regularly to ensure they don't dry out, but also be sure to allow free flow of air around the cuttings. Most cuttings root between 14 and 21 days.