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# November 2015 Newsletter



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## Next Meet

Monday, 9 Nov,  
7.30pm  
Milford Primary  
30 Shakespeare Rd  
Milford

**TALK:** Heritage  
Seeds  
**TOPIC:** Basils



## Last meet

Using Julia's book (from Julias Edible Weeds) and website (<http://www.juliasedibleweeds.com/>) as inspiration, the ladies made some great garden weeds smoothies and juices.

Did you know that the weeds in your garden is full of nutrition? And some are really delicious too! You can even add some weeds fresh to your salads (see salad herbs in this newsletter)

## In the Garden

Officially late spring, November has most of the country warm enough to plant all the herbs and vegetables your heart may desire.

Tomatoes should have been in by Labour Weekend, and well on their way to producing flowers, and herbs planted in early spring sees an accelerated growth.

Remember to plant companions to attract pollinators!

It has been a dry-ish spring so far though, and weathermen say we are in for an El Nino summer,

which for us in Auckland apparently means a hot and dry season with below average rainfall. This means that you should start with water conservation practices in your garden and plant smartly with regards to the water needs of your plants.

As the herbs and flowers grow, so do the weeds, so keep on top of weeding tasks.

Sow lettuces and fast growing herbs every few weeks for a fresh supply throughout summer.

Plant late flowering herbs such as Echinacea and bergamot for end of season delight.

## Sowing Seeds

Sowing seeds and watching your seedlings sprout through the soil, and ultimately grow into beautiful productive plants, is probably the most rewarding part of gardening for me. It's pretty easy raising most plants from seed, but there are a few basics to take note of.

1. **Know the season:** you can try, but unless you provide just about perfect growing conditions for the *whole lifecycle* of the plant, make sure you sow your seeds at the optimum times for the species.
2. **Containers:** Almost anything that can hold a bit of soil, won't rot, and allows for good drainage, can be used for starting seeds in. Personally I've got a hodge-podge of ready-made seedling trays and punnets, recycled plastic ice cream containers, and little pots and buckets to sow into. If you sow direct in the garden, no further worries re containers, but if you are direct sowing into pots, make sure the pot is large enough for the mature plant.



## Seed Sowing

## Leafy herbs for salads

3. **Growing medium:** The seed itself contains all the nutrients the young embryo plant needs to get its start in life. So, unless you are direct sowing, the seed sowing media does not need to be very rich in nutrients. It should however be quite fine to allow small roots to easily develop and grow, and allow for good drainage.
4. **Sowing:** Generally seed should not be sown too deep. A basic rule is to not go deeper than twice the seed's own size. Small seeds are often simply sprinkled on the top of the sowing media and gently watered into the soil.  
\*TIP\* Water the soil *before* sowing your seeds—this way you won't wash away the seeds when you first water them.
5. **Environment:** To kick off the germination process, you need only make sure that you keep your soil evenly moist, the growing environment warm (for most seeds), and allow adequate fresh airflow.  
\*TIP\* Spray your soil with a fine mist sprayer.

Once your seedlings have their first set of true leaves, you can transplant them into bigger pots, or their final growing position.



Ah! Summer! And with the long hot days come the quintessential Kiwi BBQ or picnic and what better way to celebrate than with a cool, fresh salad? Long gone are days of boring salads with only a bit of iceberg lettuce thought... leafy herbs (and gorgeous flowers) not only lend taste and texture to a salad, but also have some amazing nutritional value.

Here then follows a few herbs that you can try growing and adding fresh to your green salads this year:

### *Salad Burnett* *Sanguisorba minor*

This is a pretty little plant with rosettes of graceful leaflets, and deserves a space in the garden just for its good looks. The leaves are slightly nutty with a cucumber flavour, and make a delicious addition to salads. They can also be used as an edible garnish, in butters and cheeses, in vinegars, sauces and even be made into a tea.



### *Red Leaf Mustard* *Brassica juncea*

Another gorgeous plant for the garden with their large purple-red

leaves. The leaves are succulent and the stems crunchy, with a savoury and distinctly mustard-horseradish pepperiness. Harvested as a baby leaf, they are slightly milder and can be freely added fresh to salads and sandwiches, or the larger leaves can be cooked as a leafy green (often cooked with other Brassica greens and even wild greens such as dandelion leaf). They are also great in stir fries and apparently can even be pickled.

They are super healthy too—high in especially vitamins A & K as well as many other essential nutrients.



### *Good King Henry* *Chenopodium bonus-henricus*

An edible of old, quite common in English cottage gardens. The leaves are cooked like spinach, the stems and young shoots are eaten as asparagus, and the flowers were a gourmet addition to plates after being sautéed in butter. The seeds can be used, much like quinoa, as a grain alternative.

As a salad herb, the slightly bitter young triangular leaves can

## Leafy herbs for salads

be picked and added in moderation to a green salad to vary the salad's flavour. They were often used with other spring greens such as dandelion leaf and sorrel. The plant is rich in vitamins and minerals.

Good King Henry, also known as English Mercury or Goosefoot, is related to perennial spinach, lambs' quarters (*C. album*) and epazote (*C. ambrosioides*) as well as quinoa (*C. quinoa*).

\*\*\*NOTE\*\*\* uncooked, the leaves contain oxalic acid, and should only ever be eaten in moderation.



### Chervil *Anthriscus cerefolium*

With a delicate parsley-like flavour, and a traditional ingredient to the French's *fines herbes*, Chervil is a lovely fresh green addition to any meal. The leaves can be gen-



erously added to salads, soft cheeses, egg dishes, and scattered over vegetables, fish and chicken. Rich in vitamins, especially B and C, as well as iron and magnesium.

### Sorrel *Rumex spp*

Sorrels have a sharp acidic flavour, with Buckler leaf sorrel, *R. scutatus*, having a milder and more lemony zest than garden or common sorrel, *R. acetosa*. Used in moderation (depending on tastes), the young leaves make an intriguing addition to salads, especially red-veined sorrel, *R. sanguineus* which is much less



tart than other sorrels, but have very attractive red veins running through the leaf blades. Sorrel can also be cooked like spinach or made into sorrel soup, added to omelettes, in sauces and used to season dishes that require a bit of zing. As with most salad herbs, they are very good for you too—containing potassium, vitamins A, B and C.

### Lovage *Levisticum officinale*

The large, aromatic and glossy dark-green leaves of lovage has a powerful flavour and fresh young leaves make a lovely addition to salads. Lovage can also be added to soups, stock, stews, cheeses and made into a savoury-tasting tea.

### Salad Rocket *Eruca vesicaria* syn. *E. sativa*



The young pointed, lance-shaped leaves of rocket have a hot and peppery spicy flavour and are perfect for adding into salads. The leaves can also be steamed as a vegetable, or added to sauces. Other 'rockets' are also great additions to the salad bowl—wild rocket, *Diplotaxis tenuifolia*, and rocket cress, *Barbarea vulgaris*.

### Other salad herbs

If the above have you excited to try out some different things with your green salads this year, here are a few more ideas to prickle your salad imagination:

- \* Nasturtium, *Tropaeolum majus*
- \* Chives, *Allium schoenoprasum*
- \* Mizuna, *Brassica japonica*
- \* Garden cress, *Lepidium sativum*
- \* Orach, *Atriplex hortensis*
- \* Endive, *Cichorium endivia*
- \* Winter purslane/Miner's lettuce, *Montia perfoliata*
- \* Smallage/Parcel, *Apium graveolens*
- \* Weeds such as chickweed, summer purslane, lawn daisy and dandelion.
- \* Flowers such as nasturtium, rose, borage, chives, calendula, violas and pansies, pineapple sage etc.
- \* Seeds such as pumpkin, sesame and sunflower.

Not forgetting herb infused salad dressings!

Enjoy!