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September 2015 Newsletter



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Next Meet

Monday, 14 Sep,
7.30pm
Milford Primary
30 Shakespeare Rd
Milford

**TOPIC: Spring
Herbs for Cooking**

Last meet

Perfect for a rainy August night, we met at Helen's house for a DVD evening.



We enjoyed watching a DVD, Herbie's Spices, on different herbs and spices, their origins, interesting facts, and culinary uses.

Thank you Helen for hosting.

In the Garden

It is SPRING!

Spring can be one of the most exciting times in the garden, with signs of new growth slowly appearing all around, and a few warmer and longer days promising summer days soon to come.

Almost all herbs and flowers can be sown and grown in this month...

...BUT!

Spring can also be one of the most frustrating times in the garden—with over-eagerness to sow and plant and grow sometimes being met with dis-

mally cold weather and unhappy plants.

So protect young plants from cold and adverse weather, or wait a few weeks before sowing.

"As winter fades, too slowly, into spring, the sap begins to rise not only in the gardener, but in the garden. And now is the time when you must resist a mounting feeling of panic. You cannot do everything you have got to do, but the spring is longer than you think...you will find that by simply digging your garden quietly, all the spring jobs will get done in good order. And don't be in too much of a hurry." - John Seymour of The New Self-sufficient

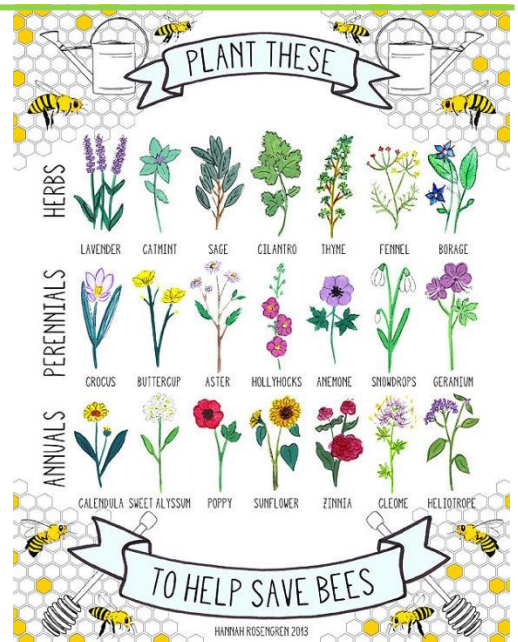
Bee Aware Month

The National Beekeepers Association of New Zealand has marked September as National Bee-Aware Month #BAM2015

With its focus of FEED THE BEES #feedthebees, it aims to educate the public about the importance of bees, and promote the growing of bee friendly plants in gardens and public spaces.

Bees are responsible for around a third of all the food we eat, and with the recent decline in numbers of healthy bees, it is vitally important to get as many people as possible involved in ensuring these insects not only survive, but thrive in our environment.

Besides growing bee friendly plants in your garden, please also take a stand against pesticides that have a negative effect on our beneficial insects. See <http://www.nba.org.nz/beeawaremonth/> for more info.



Herb Spiral Garden

Garden designs

There are a great many herb garden designs—from formal to informal, ranging in having plants with a focus on culinary, or medicinal or a hodgepodge of useful plants. Indeed, a herb garden should be, in my opinion, as individual as the person who creates it and gardens in it.

That said, a few garden designs have stood the test of time, and are quite popular amongst gardeners, and even in these seemingly rigid designs, you'll find a way to personalise it, and make it truly yours.

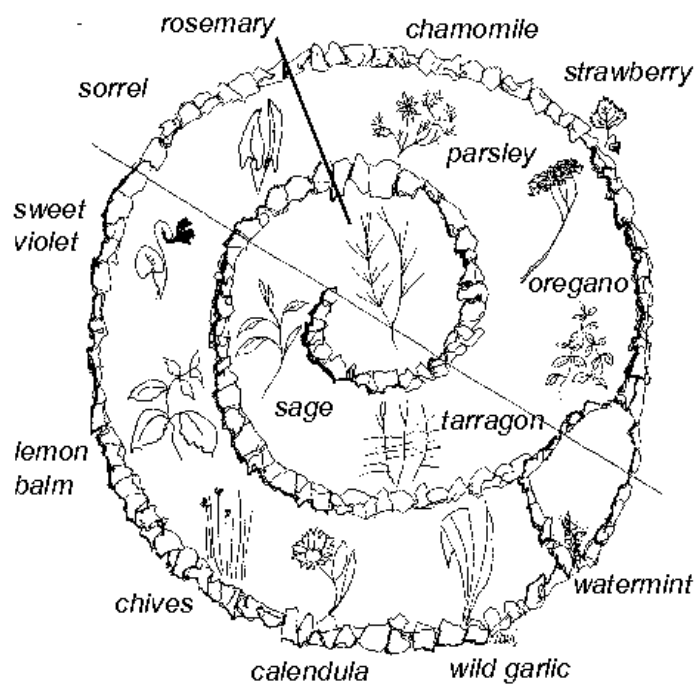
As promised earlier in the year, we'll do an insert on a few of these common garden designs. This month we focus on the Herb Spiral.

The Herb Spiral

Ubiquitous to a permaculture garden, the herb spiral is a splendid way in which to create a collection of microclimates for growing a great variety of herbs in a small space.

By making use of the vertical and horizontal space available, and its build allowing for different degrees in water flow and drainage, sun exposure and protection, the herb spiral lets you grow sun-loving plants in close proximity to ones that prefer shadier and moister conditions.

With culinary herbs falling within this broad spectrum, and space for a kitchen garden often at a premium, herb spirals are ideal for a culinary garden.



Herb Spiral Diagram from <http://cat.org.uk>

How To

1. Choose your spot

Herb spirals can range between 1.5-2m wide and 1-1.5m high and has a spiral planting path running up from ground level. They are normally sited in a sunny, relatively flat position.

2. Gather your materials

Almost any long-lived hard-scaping material can be used to create the spiral borders—stones, bricks, large stakes, even bottles.

3. Lay your spiral

Stake your complete spiral design with sticks first. Starting from the outside, lay the walls of the spiral inward along your staked design, adding layers to increase the height as you move toward the centre. You can dry-stack or use mortar to secure your hardscape material.

Try to work it so that the spiral's lowest bottom will be on the Southern side.

4. Fill with soil

Fill your spiral with a good quality soil—remembering that most herbs prefer free-draining soil, and that the design of the spiral lends itself to wetter soil at the bottom and drier soil at the top. Your garden will go downward in a light slope from top to bottom.

5. Plant

Choose the plants you like, and start planting them in your spiral, remembering to leave enough space around young plants to accommodate their eventual height and spread.

Plants preferring drier, sunnier positions are at the top, while the leafier and more moisture loving plants are toward the bottom.

Herb Spiral Garden *Enfleurage*

6. Add interest...

A pond

An interesting feature I've seen in some herb spirals is to end them in a pond at the bottom. If you want to add a pond, remember to include it in your initial design.



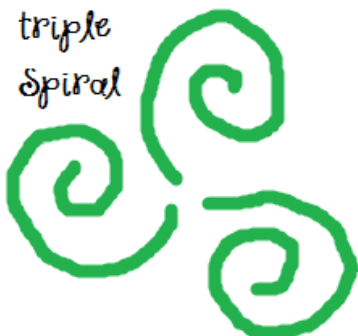
The more the merrier

One spiral not enough? Why not go double... or even triple?!

continuous spirals



triple spiral



I hope you've been inspired to give herb spirals a try!

Enfleurage is a process that uses odourless fats that are solid at room temperature to capture the fragrant compounds exuded by plants.

-Wikipedia

Early spring sees an explosion of Jasmine flowers, and brings with it evenings heavy with the intoxicating scent of these pretty little white and pink blooms.

Besides being prized in gardens because of their fragrance, the Jasmines of the world have a long history of being used to flavour teas, as a medicine, and is still prized in the essential oil and perfume industry.

Jasmine flowers make a great source of fragrant flowers for an enfleurage project—capturing that heady scent for months when the jasmines are no longer flowering.

Enfleurage of Jasmine Flowers

Materials

1. Jasmine Flowers
2. Animal fat (lard or tallow) Shea butter or coco butter can be used for a non-animal fat*
3. A flat glass plate or something similar to hold the fat and flowers.

*Note : the fat should stay quite

solid at room temperature; be as odourless as possible.

Method:

- Smear your glass plate with a layer of your fat.
- Add flowers on top of this layer of fat and leave to infuse for a few days (1-3 days)
- Remove spent flowers and replace with fresh new flowers; continue this until the fat is very fragrant.

Once the fat is saturated with fragrance, you can use it as is in soaps or creams, or you can extract an “absolute” of the flower essence by soaking the fat in ethyl alcohol. The fragrance molecules are drawn into the alcohol, which can then be separated from the fat, evaporated and you will be left with a pure botanical fragrance oil.



References

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- The Complete Book of Herbs, Lesley Bremness, DK, 1995
- Wikipedia.org
- Wikimedia.org
- The Micro Gardener