

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 08-18-04) Herbs, ©2005

The WSU Master Gardeners recently hosted an Herb Class at Northwest College of Arts in Poulsbo. Master Gardener Anne Burkhardt taught how to propagate herbs; WSU Nutritionist Sally Evenson provided information on preserving herbs and cookbook author Marie Buckner prepared tasty treats using herbs. Marie's columns are featured in the "Bluestar Gazette" from Port Townsend. Her cookbooks are sold at Central Market in Poulsbo and you can find her columns archived at [www.thebluestargazette.net](http://www.thebluestargazette.net).

The WSU Learning Garden at the College is a wonderful walled garden, divided into four quadrants, with a working greenhouse and an adaptive garden display. It's the perfect time of year to visit, especially the herb quadrant. Take an afternoon drive to visit this beautiful garden located near Milepost 9 on Highway 305 (entrance is across from the George Fireworks Stand). The next class offered by the Master Gardeners at Northwest College of Arts isn't until Sunday September 26 from 1-3 p.m. Mark your calendars now though, you won't want to miss it. The class is on Container Gardening for fall and winter color.

Master Gardener Anne Burkhardt recommends these books for great information on growing herbs: "Ultimate Herb Cook" by Antony Atha (Collins and Brown ISBN 1855859033); "Herb Gardener, A Guide for All Seasons" by Susan McClure (Storey Books ISBN 0882668730); "Your Backyard Herb Garden" by Miranda Smith (Rodale Press ISBN 0875969941); and "Growing Great Garlic" by Ron Engeland (Definitive Guide for Organic Gardeners and Small Farmers ISBN 0963085018). Anne reminded us that garlics and onions are considered herbs too. In fact September is the perfect time to plant garlic.

To obtain a copy of Anne Burkhardt's information on "Propagation of Herbs" send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the WSU Extension Office at 614 Division Street MS-16, Port Orchard WA 98366-4676. Write "herbs" on the bottom of the envelope and the office staff will send you a copy of Anne's tips. Anne says, "Herbs such as Rosemary, Sage, Oregano and Thyme need to be pruned regularly to keep them bushy and healthy." They're also the herbs we tend to use most in cooking. "While harvesting the herbs it's easy to snip a few extra pieces of the plant to propagate some more," Anne says.

Sally Evenson, Family Living Coordinator, for WSU Extension Kitsap, prepared a two-page double-sided informational handout for the class. To obtain Sally's information for the "Pleasures of the Pantry Preserving Fresh Herbs" send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the WSU Extension Office at 614 Division Street MS-16, Port Orchard WA 98366-4676. Write "Sally's Tips for Herbs" on the bottom of the envelope and the office staff will send you a copy of Sally's tips.

One of Sally's tips I especially liked is "bag drying" herbs. Sally takes a regular paper grocery bag (the kind with the paper handles) and cuts several large circles into the sides of the bag. She puts bundles of herbs – especially rosemary, mint or oregano – and hangs

the bag up in the garage or other cool dry place. The herbs air dry that way and nothing is lost on the floor. The herbs can hang that way for a long time without getting dusty she says. Sally reminded us not to store herbs in a jar on our kitchen counters. Herbs stay freshest when kept in a dark place. She also told us, "Freezing doesn't kill the aging enzymes, it only slows it down, so use up your frozen herbs in a few months rather than longer so you'll still get the freshest flavor."

"To freeze fresh herbs such as basil, sweet marjoram, mint, sage, savory and tarragon blanch a few sprigs a few seconds in boiling water, then chill them in ice water. Pat the sprigs dry, then pack them flat in small plastic bags, removing all air and seal and freeze them," says Sally. She says the flavor of these herbs is best preserved by freezing rather than drying.

Marie Buckner's cookbooks are available at Central Market in Poulsbo and she'll soon be teaching classes for the fall through both Poulsbo Parks and Rec (360-779-9898) and Central Kitsap Community Schools. "Joys of Organic Cooking" retails for twenty-five dollars and her other cookbooks are fifteen dollars. She's also working on an historical foods cookbook. Visit [www.thebluestargazette.net](http://www.thebluestargazette.net) to find her archived recipes and articles. A great tip we all learned was to use radishes in place of onions in vegetable-based recipes where you want extra spiciness. Marie likes the extra crunch the radishes give. She also bakes radishes by slicing them one-half inch thick, wrapping them in foil and baking in a 350 degree oven until tender. Master Gardener Fran Kiehnle's husband shared that he cooks his radish tops just like spinach. Marie added, "You can mix fresh radish tops into a salad, they're delicious."

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