



Participants at the Cooking with Herbs workshop toured the flower and herb gardens of Rodale Research Center to learn more about the growing and harvesting aspects of herbs.

Herbs For Fun, Profit, Nutrition

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
KUTZTOWN (Berks Co.) —
One way to rid your garden of weeds is to eat them.

"A common weed called lamb's quarter makes a great tasting spinach, and it isn't as difficult to clean as spinach," said Louise Hyde, a nationally recognized herb expert.

Hyde addressed about 70 persons who attended the Cooking With Herbs workshop held by Rodale Research Center on June 12. Hyde and her husband, Cyrus, operate Well-Sweep Herb Farm in Port Murray, N.J.

During the workshop Hyde explained the history of herbs, the basics of cooking with herbs, drying and freezing herbs, and how to make herbal vinegars, oils, marinades, salad dressings, jams and jellies.

Although herbs were first used to mask tough, tasteless meat, they are now used to embellish and enhance the flavors of meat, vegetables, and other dishes.

"When using fresh herbs, use two times the amount of purchased dried herbs since dried herbs have a more concentrated flavor," Hyde said.

She cautions those that are just beginning to use herbs in cooking to use minimal amounts until their families develop a taste for herbs.

Herb growing, harvesting

When developing a herb garden, it works best to use cuttings since most herbs are difficult to grow from seed and many do not reproduce well from seed.

Hyde mulches herbs with wood chips and said that contrary to myth, herbs do grow well in fertile soil. Hyde uses manure, and does not recommend using commercial fertilizers unless nothing else is available.

Herbs should be harvested dur-

ing the growing season before they are allowed to grow flowers or go into seed. "Keep them cut back and bushy," she said. "When cutting, leave a few leaves for underneath growth."

Although herbs should be harvested for preservation in the morning after the dew is gone and while the oil is high in the plant, Hyde said that for daily use the herbs may be cut anytime of the day while flavor is still retained.

Wash herbs and place them on paper towels to thoroughly remove water.

An unorthodox method to dry herbs, but one that works well is to put parsley in a pillowcase, seal it, and dry in a clothes dryer.

To dry, herbs also may be tied with string and hung upside down in a warm, dry, well-ventilated spot.

Parsley may be dried by snipping off tops and laying them in a single layer on a brown bag on top of a cookie sheet. Do not lay herbs directly on metal. Put the herbs in a 150-degree oven, leave the oven door open a crack, and dry for 45 to 60 minutes. Heavy foliage needs more time. Make sure herbs are completely dry or they will mold. If stems crack when bent, the herb is dried. She said that the microwave also does a wonderful job of drying herbs.

When dry, seal the herbs in plastic bags, jars or other tight containers and place in a dark place.

To freeze, chop leaves and quick freeze in single layers placed on a cookie sheet before placing in a tight container for long-term freezing.

Herbs that are frozen work well in cooking, but are not as attractive for use in a fresh salad.

Edible flowers

Rose geranium leaves work well to flavor tea, cakes, cookies, rolls, and other baked goods. To pre-

serve leaves, put leaves in a blender with a half-cup sugar and blend. The sugar crystals prevent the leaves from sticking together in a solid bunch.

"The Johnny Jump Ups are a storehouse of vitamins," Hyde said.

Punch and candied flowers can be made from Johnny Jump Ups, nasturtiums, chrysanthemums, porridge, lavender flowers and chive flowers.

To make candied flowers, beat egg whites, dip petals in egg white and sprinkle with sugar. Dry in refrigerator on wax paper for two days. Use for decorations for special occasions.

Herb vinegars

"Herb vinegars are extremely simple to make," Hyde told workshop participants.

Although white, apple, cider, and other flavors of vinegar may be used, she said that cheap vinegars do not work as well since the acid content is not high enough.

To make herb vinegar, take a bottle of vinegar, dump out one-third of the vinegar, press herb leaves of your choice in the bottle. Pour the vinegar back in the bottle, make sure all leaves are covered. Tighten plastic lids on the containers. If metal is used, you must line with waxed paper to prevent the acid from eating the metal. Within two weeks, the vinegar is ready to use.

Hyde lets the herbs remain in the vinegar. If the flavor becomes too strong, she adds more vinegar or removes the leaves.

Hyde's favorite flavors for herbal vinegars are purple basil, sweet basil, and clover garlic. "Orange mint vinegar is great for salad dressing or as a marinade," she said.

Herb oils

For herb oils, it is important not to use garlic unless the mixture is kept refrigerated. She adds such herbs as bay leaves, red chili peppers, coriander leaves and red chili peppers. Herb oils do not need to be sealed, but should be used within several months or the oil will grow rancid. The herb oils may be canned by using the hot water pack method.

Jellies

To make rose geranium jelly, follow the directions for making apple jelly that appear on pectin



Guests tasted the salads made with herbs provided by Rodale Research Center.

See your nearest
NEW HOLLAND
Dealer for Dependable
Equipment and
Dependable Service:

PENNSYLVANIA

Annville, PA
BHM Farm
Equipment, Inc
RD1, Rte 934
717-867-2211

Carlisle, PA
R&W Equipment Co
35 East Willow Street
717-243-2686

Davidsburg, PA
George N. Gross, Inc.
R.D. 2, Dover, PA
717-292-1673

Elizabethtown, PA
Messick Farm
Equipment, Inc.
Rt 283 - Rheem's Exit
717-367-1319

Gettysburg, PA
Yingling Implements,
Inc
3291 Taneytown Rd
717-359-4848

Greencastle, PA
Meyers
Implement's Inc.
400 N. Antrim Way
P.O. Box 97
717-597-2176

Hallfax, PA
Sweigard Bros.
R.D. 3, Box 13
717-896-3414

Hamburg, PA
Shartlesville
Farm Service
R.D. 1, Box 1392
215-488-1025

Honey Brook, PA
Dependable Motor Co
East Main Street
215-273-3131
215-273-3737

Honey Grove, PA
Norman D. Clark
& Son, Inc.
Honey Grove, PA
717-734-3682

Hughesville, PA
Farnsworth Farm
Supplies, Inc.
103 Cemetery Street
717-584-2106

New Holland, PA
A B C Groff, Inc.
110 South Railroad
717-354-4191

Oley, PA
C J Wonsidler Bros
R.D. 2
215-987-6257

Pitman, PA
Schreffler Equipment
Pitman, PA
717-648-1120

Quakertown, PA
C J Wonsidler Bros
R.D. 1
215-536-1935

Tamaqua, PA
Charles S. Snyder, Inc.
R.D. 3
717-386-5945

West Grove, PA
S G Lewis & Son, Inc
R.D. 2, Box 66
215-869-2214

MARYLAND

Churchville, MD
Walter G. Coale, Inc
2849-53
Churchville Rd
301-838-6470

Frederick, MD
Ceresville
Ford New Holland, Inc
Rt. 26 East
301-662-4197
Outside MD,
800-331-9122

Hagerstown, MD
Antetam Ford Tractor
301-791-1200

NEW JERSEY

Bridgeton, N.J.
Leslie G. Fogg, Inc.
Canton & Stow Creek
Landing Rd
609-451-2727
609-935-5145

Washington, NJ
Smith Tractor &
Equip, Inc
15 Hillcrest Ave.
201-689-7900

Woodstown, NJ
Owen Supply Co.
Broad Street &
East Avenue
609-769-0308