

## Indoor gardening

Want to add a bit of beauty and freshness to your home this winter? And eat it, too? Well there are many options available now. One of my favorite ideas is growing a windowsill garden of micro-greens and herbs for salads. Micro-greens sound unusual but it's really just seeds usually used for sprouts grown in soilless mix. You can recycle your berry containers from the grocery store into mini planters, too. They function well because of the many openings, which allows for good drainage. When sprouting any seed keeping the soil moist is important but you never want to 'drown' the seeds because of poor drainage.

So here's the technique; you'll need a sunny window sill, protecting it with a saucer will be good for the sill! Next if you don't have any potting mix left from your summer container garden projects, buy a small fresh bag at the hardware store. It will serve you well not to use garden soil since it can have bugs overwintering in it and is more prone to compaction in a pot. Not to mention it's probably frozen solid right now. Fill your containers  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of soil. Sprinkle the seeds of choice on top and sprinkle a small amount of fine soil over them, press lightly on the soil. If you are using larger seeds like sunflower (which do make good greens) sprinkle a bit more soil over them and then press the soil lightly to insure contact. Water thoroughly but don't run a heavy stream from the faucet or you'll dislodge the seed bed you've just created. I like to water from the bottom by placing the new container in a pot with a bit of water in it placed in the sink, especially at first to get the soil hydrated and then use a sprayer, I always have one in the house for house plants. You can repurpose a glass cleaner bottle that's been rinsed well. I always rinse the seeds before I plant them just to be sure they're



clean. Always buy organic seed designated for sprouting, otherwise they could be treated with any manner of chemicals. Cut the seedlings just above the soil line when harvesting.

That's it!

Next I'll give you some ideas on what kind of seeds work well. First for a slightly spicy addition to the salad try radish sprouts, they'll take 3 to 6 days

to sprout. Fun and quick! Sunflower seeds take a bit longer 12 to 14 days in the winter. But they are big and 'different looking' in the salad bowl. Of course delicious is important, too. Cress is very quick (2-4 days) and has that slightly peppery taste, a bit like arugula. Arugula takes 7 to 10 days in winter. One I've been meaning to try is lentils they only take 2 to 3 days. And lastly we've all had alfalfa sprouts; it just might be time to grow them as greens!



If you'd like to add a few herbs to your windowsill garden you can bring in a few from the garden in the fall, or buying an herb kit is fun and educational for the kids. You can start them from seed, too. Basil does very well in a sunny window as does parsley. I've had a rosemary plant on a cool porch for years. I just put it out in the summer for 'vacation'!

Gardening in the winter can be fun and rewarding.

Hope you give it a try!

Compiled by Phyllis Minich, Master gardener of Fulton & Montgomery counties



