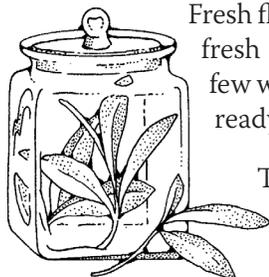
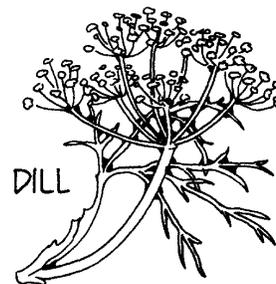




HERBS

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Fresh flavor is just a *snip* away if you keep fresh herbs in your garden. Here are a few ways to keep those herbs fresh and ready to use.

The trick to keeping herbs fresh is to treat them as you would a delicate flower. Although rinsed herbs wrapped in towels and enclosed in a plastic bag keep well enough for a day or two, their life is greatly extended when they are stored as follows:

1. Harvest herbs (or untie those purchased in the store) and immerse in cool water, shaking gently to dislodge any soil or insects. Discard decayed stalks and leaves. Snip off stems just above a break or bruise. Gently shake excess water from leaves, being careful to avoid further bruising.
2. Place stems in a container of water (a vase or canning jar) that holds them snugly, leaves above the rim.
3. Cover leaves loosely with a plastic bag, such as a produce bag.
4. Refrigerate, changing water when it looks murky. Snip off any parts of stems that show sign of decay. If you're storing several jars, group them in a close-fitting rimmed container to try to protect them from being knocked over.

How long can you expect to keep those fresh herbs fresh? *Basil* will last on the counter top for up to 31 days. In the refrigerator, *chervil* stays fresh for 8 days, *chives*

for 9, *cilantro* up to 14, *dill* for 9, *parsley* up to 21 and *tarragon* for up to 17 days.

Here's a new idea for using those fresh herbs! Flavored vinegars — these new flavored vinegars can be used to enliven the taste of sauces, glazes and marinades; as a splash on fruits; and as a low-fat, low sodium flavor enhancer to drizzle on meats, fish, mushrooms and vegetables. Flavored vinegars are easy to make, add a distinctive touch to a range of dishes and make terrific gifts.

To create your own vinegar, start with a good commercial vinegar. Choose white wine vinegar if you are going to add delicate flavors such as thyme and mint. Apple cider vinegar compliments fruit flavorings.

For flavoring, use one or more of the following for each pint of vinegar: three or four springs of fresh herbs; 1 cup fresh ripe raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, pears or other fruit; 2 cloves coarse chopped peeled garlic; or the peel of an orange or lemon.

Place flavoring ingredients in pint jars (sterilized to prevent the vinegar from turning cloudy). Heat the vinegar to just below boiling and pour into jars. Cap the jars and let them stand undisturbed in a cool dark place so that flavors can develop and blend.

After 3 to 4 weeks, strain out the herbs and other ingredients and pour into sterilized, labeled containers.

Be sure to save some "taste of summer herbs" for your winter meals!



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