

JANUARY: Maintaining and Expanding Winter Indoor Gardens!

So, did you plant your winter indoor garden last month? If not, of course it is not too late - try planting a terrarium (described below), or a small garden of quick-growing microgreens or lettuces! Check out last month's newsletter as well as some suggestions below! If you did plant an indoor garden, great job (send photos to NRPA)! Finally for this month, wanted to send out a reminder to search out and find nutritious fruits and veggies during winter – check out dried fruits and veggies in particular!

Remember to keep an eye on items below to maintain a good environment for your indoor gardens:

Light: Your plants need natural sunlight, or light from a bulb that gives off the same type of light/wavelengths as the sun (not a regular light bulb)! Most need 14-16 hours of sunlight or simulated light. If your plant is not getting enough light, it usually will have small leaves, thin stems, and the color of the plant will be lighter than usual.

Temperature: Plants will thrive between temperatures of 65-75°F. You will know if your plants are too hot if they look small and weak; if they are too-cold, they may have yellow leaves that fall off.

Water: Different plants have different moisture needs. Look up what your plants require, and make sure the soil has the right moisture level. Use a moisture gauge if needed (<http://bit.ly/soilmoist>). Spray leaves and soil with water if needed.

Nutrients: Indoor plants often need more nutrients/feeding of fertilizers than outdoor plants! So find some easy-to-use fertilizer, follow the instructions, and feed your plants regularly (<http://bit.ly/indoorfeed>).

Easy Edibles to Try Indoors!

If you have not planted your indoor garden yet, or if you want to expand your indoor garden, here are some suggestions and links to a few websites to get you growing indoors!

Leafy Salad Greens

Leafy salad greens are quick-growing, and, easy to grow. Packed full of vitamins A, C and K, and fiber, these colorful edibles hopefully will become an indoor gardening feature of your home! One recommendation we found for growing lettuces inside uses those plastic berry containers we always are recycling! Try this: scatter seed in plastic berry containers lined with several layers of moist paper towels. Place the containers with the seeded towels in a brown paper bag and place in a dark area of your home or afterschool site. Spray the towel periodically with water to maintain a moist environment. When the seedlings get 1 inch tall, remove them from the bag, and place the container of seedlings in a location with good light, but not in direct sunlight. When the greens are 2 to 3 inches tall, harvest them and enjoy!



Fresh Herbs

Herbs are so fragrant, and make our dishes pop! Most are very easy to grow indoors, and are tremendously handy in your kitchen for cooking. Many companies sell pre-seeded containers you can grow indoors. Or, plant your own basil, parsley, oregano, thyme, sage, and other herb seeds in seed-starter, lightweight soil in small plastic pots placed on your windowsill. Water well, but don't overdo it.

Images from and text adapted from: <https://www.fix.com/blog/indoor-edible-plants/>

An Edible Terrarium: Indoor Gardening in a "Bottle"!

"Gardens in a bottle," better known as terrariums, are a beautiful and yummy! And, the plants are so cute in miniaturized size! When designing your terrarium, think about the potential size of plants, tall in the back, shorter up front. Typically, a terrarium is made of four layers: 1) bottom layer comprised of pebbles or very coarse sand for drainage; 2) thin layer of activated charcoal (like an aquarium filter), which will filter fumes from decomposing material; 3) Sphagnum moss (<http://amzn.to/2BeLu25>) should be used in the following layer, which will stop the soil from sifting through to the bottom layer; and 4) soil as the top layer. No fertilizers nor beach sand. Some stores sell terrarium sand (<http://bit.ly/growsand>). Try some yummy edible plants in your "bottle!"

- **Tiny varieties of tomatoes** – Small types of tomatoes, like Tiny Tim, do very well in a terrarium. They only grow one foot high, and produce tomatoes the size of grapes. These types of tomatoes don't need as much light as other tomatoes, making them easy to care for (<http://bit.ly/buytinytom>).
- **Thyme** – The herb thyme does not like soggy roots. Place thyme in a drier area of the terrarium, like on a mound. It likes at least six hours of sunlight, but indirect light is fine. Allow the soil around this plant to dry fully before watering again.
- **Mint** – Mint is an easy herb to grow indoors, and like thyme, needs indirect sunlight, doesn't like soggy soil, but likes more moisture than thyme above. If needed, mist between waterings.
- **Sage** – This aromatic, tasty herb grows well in a terrarium because it likes a bit of humidity. Sage also likes plenty of sunlight, around six to eight hours. Like many herbs, sage needs soil that drains well. You should only water this herb when needed, when the top inch of soil is dry.
- **Oregano** – Oregano grows well with thyme and sage. It likes well-drained soil that dries out between waterings. This herb likes to have between six and eight hours of sunlight and does well with frequent trims and pruning.



More information available at, and content above adapted from: <http://bit.ly/GardenBottle>

This month: search out colorful **dried fruits and veggies** to get your daily dose of nutrients! Bake (dry out!) some powerhouse kale, recipe at: <http://bit.ly/driedkalechips>. Mix some raisins, dried apricots, or other dried fruits into steel-cut oatmeal for breakfast, or throw some on top of mixed green salads for a nutritious touch of sweetness. Dried fruits and veggies are great for snacks, they are portable and not messy, great for kids! Challenge your family to eat dried fruits and/or veggies every other day during January!

