

SPRING HAS OFFICIALLY SPRUNG!!!!

The snow drops are peeking their little heads up through the thawing tundra and the crocus' are popping up in patches all over the yard. Robins are anxiously awaiting any grassy knoll to emerge so they can hunt for food to feed their soon-to-be-born, young. The geese have all finally returned home. As a child, these things were a sure sign that Spring was here and better yet, the hot days of summer were soon to follow! There is nothing more beautiful than having a vibrant and fragrant flower garden with continuous blooms all summer long! What's even better? Planting that garden all by yourself and soaking in your personal gains!

Even if you're not an avid gardener, there is some sort of personal accomplishment in watching the bulbs you planted last fall burst through the soil in the early morning sun. Us caregivers are natural born nurturers. Caring for a garden is very similar to what we do on a daily basis. We check in, give food, attention and love. "We are all gardening, everyday, whether we know it or not".

Plant your seeds, pronto!! Starting your garden indoors is an ideal way to begin your garden, whether it be veggies *or* flowers. Having an established root system when you are ready to transplant your seedlings into the ground, gives them a great start at success. Grab yourself a big ole gardening book at the thrift store and get familiar with types of soil and nourishment (poop, heehee) if any, that your garden will need. Once your little seeds start to sprout, keep them misted, in a warm location (preferably in the sun) and tented in plastic wrap until they're over growing the tray. Of course, wait until the risk of frost is gone before planting them in their final happy place, typically in early June.

If you have little ones at home, or Grandbabies that pop in once in a while, gardening is a wonderful way for them to have the same feeling of accomplishment and excitement when they actually get to eat what they've grown and cared for. Get their little hands to work by helping them start their very own planter! Have them choose their own packets of seeds and soil. Dollar stores are a wonderful place to grab gardening gloves and tools, specially made for little hands. I was at the store today to grab some for my Grandsons for their Easter baskets and the aisles are full!! "Gardening gives children a chance to learn an important life skill, one that is overlooked in standard school curriculums. Gardening is also a

great way to teach environmental awareness by exploring the workings of nature". - EarthEasy

Along with gardening season comes barbequing season!! Why not plant a window box with your favourite herbs!?! I have attached a link for an easy DIY herb garden, even if you prefer one for your window sill on the inside. Herbs are not only suitable for all of your culinary needs but most have excellent health benefits as well. Did you know, basil is a natural anti-inflammatory and stress reliever!?! Lavender is great for headaches and sleep troubles!?! Mint uplifts your senses and lends you an invigorating feeling!?! I love mint and it just happens to be amazingly refreshing when muddled in the bottom of your cocktail glass with a splash of freshly squeezed lime juice. (rum is optional)

[June 10 is National Herbs and Spices Day \(eatlikemen.com\)](http://eatlikemen.com) is the link where you can find the "how to" and the "health benefits" of growing your own herb garden!!

MOSQUITOES.....I thought that would grab your attention! These pesky little insects can not only suck your blood, but they can suck the FUN right out of your summer!! Help keep them at bay by planting these natural bug repelling plants around your decks and patios:

- LAVENDER - this ancient plant is the BEST in repelling all kinds of bugs! Side note: plant in a window box under your bedroom window for a lavender induced restful sleep!!!
- CITRONELLA - yes, you usually buy citronella scented candles, right? Plant an actual citronella plant instead. You can tear off a few leaves and rub them vigorously between your hands, wiping the oil onto your clothes or skin! Yes, it's safe and no, it won't stain!
- LEMONGRASS - I can't get enough of this stuff. Not only do I use it when cooking Asian inspired dishes, (and for cleaning and disinfecting, weird, I know) it's great for repelling insects and very pretty in your garden or planters too! Its oil does attract honey bees.....they're the nice kind, don't worry. Just BEE nice!
- MINT - now you can enjoy your mojito, bug free! Mosquitos, moths, ants and aphids hate mint. Fine, all the more for me!
- EVERGREEN ROSEMARY - like the name states, its ever-green throughout the spring and summer and presents a beautiful lush pine scent. This plant is not just for flavouring your roast beef anymore!! This plant is very dense, pretty for any landscape AND repels mosquitoes, beetles and those annoying common flies.
- CORIANDER - aka Cilantro. Actually, the seeds are coriander but the leaves are cilantro...but....whatever you want to call it, spiders and

other creepy crawlers hate it. I love it. I also love cilantro in guacamole! A win, win for our backyard deck dwellers!!

- THYME - if you like to border your veggie garden with flowers...(marigolds are great bug repellents and adds vibrancy to an otherwise 99% green foliage patch) consider alternating those flowers with thyme. It is edible and will help protect your crop from moths, beetles and ants.
- WOOLLY THYME - my absolute personal favourite, this plant is a very sturdy ground cover that you can walk on!! We have dense waves of this wonderfully fragrant "carpet" planted between the cracks in our flagstone garden pathway and patio. It smells more like lavender than standard English thyme and bugs dispise it. Mosquitoes find you? Don't leave that adirondack...just simply shuffle your feet on your natural outdoor carpet of woolly thyme and they'll be gone in seconds, I promise!

I hope for you to find time to build yourself a garden. Spend time with yourself, for yourself. I hope while on your knees in the soil that you find grounding and a sense of peace, perhaps without even knowing it. Take in the sounds around you, the birds and the buzzing but not the noise. Spending time in your garden is time never wasted. I hope you have a blessed spring and summer.

To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow

- Audrey Hepburn