

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for August 17, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about preserving herbs and some upcoming programs from OSU Extension and the Coshocton Public Library.

There is nothing like a ripe, red tomato straight from the garden! This week tomato harvest from our garden has really picked up. It has certainly been a productive year with zucchini, cucumbers, and green beans galore! I recently told someone, tongue in cheek, that it is amazing how well a garden can perform when you consistently weed, water, and harvest. It takes effort and investing some of our extra time sticking around home has been paying off.

A few years ago, I began planting herbs in containers. I keep those containers close to the house, so they are easy to access right outside my door. I will admit I was a little inconsistent in remembering to water them during May and June. But then I had an aha moment. After dumping the water from the basement dehumidifier down the drain daily for the umpteenth time, I asked myself, "Isn't there something useful I could be doing with this perfectly good water?" And so, a new habit began of quenching the herbs and container flowers with our captured water.

Needless to say, my herbs have been growing much better. So much so that I have more basil, oregano, and rosemary than I can possibly cook with right now. There are several different options for preserving herbs. Drying is probably the one that comes to mind first for most people. You can dry herbs in the oven, microwave, dehydrator or simply by air drying.

My preferred method is freezing. It is simple to do and can be done relatively quickly. I'll note that freezing significantly slows the growth of microorganisms that can cause food spoilage or foodborne illness, but it will not kill them. Therefore, practice good hand hygiene and avoid cross contamination when preparing to preserve your herbs.

Herbs should be frozen at their peak freshness for best results. It is recommended to use frozen herbs within 3 to 6 months for best quality, though they are safe to eat for at least a year. Like all leafy plant tissue, freezing herbs will result in a mushier texture than when fresh. Therefore, using these herbs in cooked dishes will be the most ideal.

You can freeze whole or cut herbs. My favorite way to chop herbs is to cut them with kitchen shears. It is much easier and quicker than using a knife. One method is to place them on a cookie sheet in a single layer and place in the freezer for approximately two hours. I like to chop herbs and place about one teaspoon per section of an ice cube tray. Then fill each section with one or two tablespoons of olive oil or water. Once these are frozen, you can pop them out and place them in a zip top freezer bag. This makes it super easy to add fresh herb taste to soups and casseroles this fall and winter.

Another fun idea is to freeze mint with added water in ice cube trays. Add freshly brewed tea to a glass of these mint ice cubes for a cool summer drink. Or make some infused water with blackberries or lime and add some mint ice cubes to your glass. Herbs and fruit combinations like “Blueberry Orange Basil” and “Watermelon Rosemary” are deliciously refreshing during these dog days of summer. You can learn more by visiting Ohioline.osu.edu and typing “herbs” into the search.

Now we’ll take a look at some upcoming OSU Extension programs. There are many strategies out there to conquer clutter. At their basic level most have to do with minimizing and then organizing what we have. I enjoy researching this area of consumer sciences and would love to share some practical tips with you. I’ll be teaching “Declutter Your Life” on Facebook Live through the Coshocton Public Library Facebook Page on Thursday, September 10 at 7:00 pm.

I’m also teaching an interactive workshop virtually on Zoom on Thursday, September 24 at noon called “Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?” Planning for the transfer of both titled and non-titled property is an important issue that can significantly impact family relations. This workshop will not focus on land or buildings or vehicles you own – but all those other important non-titled items that can carry a lot of meaning and significance to us. Come learn about strategies to jumpstart conversations about inheritance and some key decision-making factors in non-titled property transfer. You are asked to RSVP to the Coshocton Public Library at 740-622-0956.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!