

Flora & Fauna

## Drying and Storing Herbs

Many of us spend a great deal of money on herbs and spices for cooking. Just about every recipe calls for an herb of some sort to add flavor and depth to the food. By growing and drying your own herbs, you can save money and make some delicious improvements to your cooking.

### Drying Herbs

1. Find a good spot along a healthy stem of your plant to cut. Choose a spot that is just above a set of leaves (which will eventually grow out and form new branches). Unless you're planning on harvesting the entire plant, be sure to leave at least 5 leaves on the stem so the plant will be able to regenerate. (Note: It's best to cut before your plant flowers.)
2. Rinse off your clippings in cool water to remove any dust and dirt that may have accumulated on the leaves. This should be done whether you harvest your herb clippings from a garden or from a potted plant on your porch.
3. Allow the clippings to drip-dry in your dish drying rack, or leave them on a paper towel on your counter for a few hours. The herbs should be relatively dry before you hang them to prevent mold and mildew from growing on the leaves.
4. Remove the lower leaves from the bottom inch of the stem.
5. Grab a bit of string (yarn or twine works well), and tightly wrap it around the very bottom of the stems. Start with one or two clippings, wrap the string around, then add in another clipping, wrap the string, and so on until you have a tightly wrapped bundle.
6. Suspend the bundle by the stems inside a small, brown paper bag labeled with the date and name of herb that you're drying. Gather the ends of the bag around the stems and tie it securely shut.
7. Lastly, hang the bag in a warm, airy room for three weeks. You can hang it from a rod in an empty closet, dangle it from a wine rack, or secure it to your kitchen baker's rack.

### Storing Herbs

1. Once the three weeks have passed, open the bag and strip the dried leaves from the stems. Discard any leaves that look like they might have mold on them.
2. Place the leaves in airtight containers. You can use zip closing bags or small canning jars. Label and date your containers.
3. Store the leaves whole and only crush them when you're ready to use them. They'll retain more flavor that way.
4. Place containers in a cool, dry place away from sunlight.
5. Use your dried herbs within a year. As their color fades, so does their flavor.
6. When using your herbs in recipes, you can substitute one teaspoon of crumbled, dried leaves in place of a tablespoon of fresh herbs.

## **GUARANTEE SYSTEM.**

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### *Cleaning Corner:*

#### *Getting Rid of Grease and Sticky Stuff*

Every home has greasy handprints on walls and adhesive labels that never quite came off. Here are a few easy solutions to get that sticky gunk out of your life.

**Grease on wallpaper and fabrics.** To remove grease and stains deposited by oily hands, cover the spot with blotter paper and press briefly with a warm iron. The heat loosens and thins the grease, which is absorbed in the blotter. Repeat as needed.

**Adhesive labels.** Labels and price tags are affixed to almost every new product you buy. The trouble is, only some of them peel away without leaving a gummy residue. If the adhesive is stuck to a solid, smooth surface such as porcelain or glass, a new safety razor blade works well, if handled carefully. Use a lubricant such as vegetable oil or baby oil to prevent the blade from sticking. Or, try Avon Skin-So-Soft. The company bills it as an "age-defying and renewing body moisturizer," but it also does wonder for removing sticky goop!

## *August*

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|------|---|
| 1181 | A supernova is observed by Chinese and Japanese astronomers   |
| 1776 | Formal signing of the Declaration of Independence   |
| 1785 | Caroline Herschel becomes the first woman discoverer of a comet   |
| 1806 | Francis II, the last Holy Roman Emperor, abdicates the throne, thus ending the Holy Roman Empire                    |
| 1876 | Colorado becomes the 38th state   |
| 1885 | 13,000 meteors are seen in 1 hour near Andromeda  |
| 1926 | Harry Houdini performs his greatest feat, spending 91 minutes underwater in a sealed tank before escaping           |
| 1944 | Anne Frank makes the last entry in her diary  |
| 1981 | MTV begins broadcasting in the United States and airs its first video, "Video Killed the Radio Star" by the Buggles |

# Health Advice: How to Help a Friend with Cancer

When a friend is diagnosed with cancer, our natural instinct is to offer comfort. We often find ourselves saying, “If there’s anything you need, call me.” Yet our friends never call to ask for help. It’s not because they don’t want it. They may be too embarrassed to ask for help, or they simply may not know what they need. Here are a few things you can do to offer your friend some comfort during this trying time without her ever having to ask:

- Let her know you’d like to go with her to the doctor. Offer to pick her up, take notes during the appointment or simply hold her purse, and then drive her home.
- Bring food that freezes in disposable containers. Label the containers with contents and reheating instructions.
- Offer to be the friend who will let others know what is happening with her health. You could set up a phone tree or e-mail group, so she doesn’t have to constantly be communicating good or bad news over and over again.
- Take her car out, gas it up and have it washed.
- Leave a bag outside her door to fill with her dirty laundry. Take it home with you and bring it back that day or the very next, cleaned and folded. You can also offer to take clothes to the dry cleaners.
- Send a manicurist or a masseuse to her house. Be sure to pay for the service in advance (including a gratuity) and let your friend know you have done so.
- See if your husband can take her husband out for golf or invite him over to watch a game. Often no one thinks of the stress a husband carries when his wife is ill.
- Provide her with a housecleaner for a day. Pay the housecleaner and let your friend know you have taken care of everything.
- In her mailbox, leave an envelope of gift certificates or coupons to places that deliver food.
- Offer to help write, address and stamp her thank-you notes. Bring over some pretty stationery and several booklets of stamps. And allow her to dictate some notes, and you can send them out.
- Go card shopping and give her an assortment of occasion cards (anniversary, graduation, birthday, etc.). Bundle them together with a nice pen and some pretty stamps.
- Take her kids out to see a fun movie or for ice cream. She will love knowing they are having fun, and she will get some quiet time to spend by herself or with her husband.
- Pick up a grocery bag of “staples” (bread, juice, cereal, milk, toilet paper, paper towels, etc.) and drop them off at her door. Call (or e-mail if the items aren’t perishable) to let her know that they are there.
- On garbage day, help her by making sure her garbage cans make it to the curb. Bring them back at the end of the day.

## Kid Corner: Back to School on a Budget

Though it seems like the summer has just barely started, it’s time for your kids, and your wallet, to get ready for school. The back-to-school shopping season is a lucrative one for retailers, but it can be a cash-strapped one for parents. Here are a few tips to save money during the back-to-school shopping season.

### • **Make a List**

Make a master list of the school supplies and wardrobe items your child will need. Then evaluate your current supplies to see what you can already cross off the list. Heavy-duty items like clipboards and backpacks can be used for more than one year, while items like broken crayons and dried out markers will need to be replaced.

*Tip:* Instead of buying pencils and pens, send your child back to school with the free ones that businesses hand out (like the ones that are currently taking up space in your junk drawer).

### • **Hit the Garage Sales**

Chances are you won’t find school supplies at a garage sale, but you may find clothing. Gently used clothes at bargain prices will stretch your back-to-school budget considerably. Clothing tends to be the most expensive part of back-to-school shopping, so any savings here will have a big impact.

*Tip:* Try organizing a swap meet with the other parents in your neighborhood. It’s a great way for everyone to get rid of clothes that no longer fit their child and get gently used items in return at no cost!

### • **Shop Around**

10-cent crayons, 5-cent folders, 50-cent binders – stores fight hard for your back-to-school dollars, and that’s great news for you. Watch the weekly sales flyers closely, then pick the best buys from each store. Remember: Just because store X wants you to spend all of your back-to-school dollars at their store, it doesn’t mean you have to. So, get those 10-cent crayons, and get out.

*Tip:* Shop at a store that offers price matching and you won’t have to burn up extra gas to get the good deals at other stores

### • **Personalize**

Plain Jane school supplies always cost less than their fancier counterparts, but let’s face it: to a kid, they just aren’t as fun. The solution? Buy the budget-friendly basics, then let your kid jazz them up with stickers and colorful doodles.

### • **Wait an Extra Month or Two**

School supplies generally need to be brought to school on the first day, but all the clothing does not need to be purchased ahead of time. One special, new outfit for the first day of school is often enough. Wait until the next month to buy those long pants and long-sleeved shirts that your child won’t be wearing until the weather starts to cool.

Popeye was famous for saying, "I'm strong to the finish, cause I eats me spinach, I'm Popeye the Sailor Man!" But not too many kids (and even some adults) are excited about eating this incredibly healthy food. Here is a delicious casserole that will have them (and you!) asking for seconds.

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup instant brown rice
- 4 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 1 carrot, shredded
- 3 whole green onions, sliced
- 1 tablespoon margarine or butter
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with a fork in a cup
- 1 handful of shredded cheddar cheese
- A pinch of garlic salt

### Directions:

1. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, add water and microwave on high for two minutes, or until boiling. Stir in the rice and set aside.
2. In a casserole dish, combine spinach, carrot, onions and margarine. Cover and microwave on high for 4 minutes.
3. Mix in the rice, egg, cheese, and garlic salt. Stir. Microwave on high uncovered for 5 minutes, or until the center is set. (It is set when butter knife inserted in center comes out clean.)

### The Power of Spinach

Popeye was really on to something by eating spinach. He not only got stronger, but he also protected himself against osteoporosis, heart disease, colon cancer, arthritis, and other diseases at the same time. Researchers have identified at least 13 different flavonoid compounds in spinach that function as antioxidants and anti-cancer agents. These minerals promote better eyesight, gastrointestinal health, bone health, mental function, and overall energy. While spinach won't have the super-hero effect on you that it did on Popeye, it does come pretty close!

## Are We There Yet? Rules for Happy Carpools

Carpooling is a great way to make a big impact on the environment and on your budget. It reduces the number of cars on the highways, thus reducing the amount of pollution, plus it reduces the amount you spend on gas and car maintenance. Setting up a carpool is as easy as logging on to a carpooling website like [www.pickuppal.com](http://www.pickuppal.com) or simply asking your co-workers if they're interested in joining.

Before you start a carpooling arrangement, however, it's a good idea to set up some ground rules in advance. Here's what you should discuss:

1. **Who drives and when?** Perhaps one person drives on Mondays and Wednesdays, the other on Tuesdays and Thursdays, then they alternate Fridays. Be sure to get this part figured out and agreed on in advance.
2. **How often will you carpool?** It's not necessary to carpool every day, especially if you know that some days are more hectic for you than others. Try setting up a carpool just once or twice a week; even that is better than driving solo all the time.
3. **What are the pick-up and drop-off arrangements?** Determine your route and schedule. Establish a morning pick-up point and a place to meet for the trip home.
4. **How will you split costs?** The biggest cost will be fuel, but there may also be tolls and parking fees to consider. Decide how these costs will be split before you begin carpooling.
5. **What's the back-up plan?** Have a contingency plan in case the driver is sick, goes on vacation, or if the car breaks down. It's also a good idea to establish a set amount of time the carpool will wait past the designated pick-up time for a rider.
6. **Set up car rules.** Are food and drinks allowed? Smoking? Do people prefer silence or listening to the radio? If someone is allergic to perfume or pet hair, make sure all riders skip the heavy scents and run a sticky roller over their clothes before leaving the house. All of these details, if worked out ahead of time, make the ride much more enjoyable.
7. **Create a contact sheet.** Create a sheet that has contact information for the other members of the carpool in the event of illness, accidents or other unforeseen circumstances.

## ...Caring for Leather...

Leather is a popular choice in furniture, car interiors, clothes and accessories. And along with the cozy leather sofa and the great shoes comes the frustration of keeping them clean. Here are some simple solutions you can use at home to keep your leather looking like new. Of course, if you get in a pinch, call your carpet care professional to help you out!

- **Protect leather.** Always keep leather furniture out of direct sunlight to prevent drying and cracking the leather.
- **For general leather cleaning,** use a moisturizing soap such as Dove. Lather on a soft cloth, and wash the item to remove dirt and grime. Do not over-wet the leather, and do not rinse after washing. Just buff with a soft cloth; this allows the moisturizing soap to condition the leather. Polish as usual.
- **To remove water spots,** moisten the area again with a little water, let it dry or gently blow dry. Never place leather in the sun to dry.
- **To remove road salt,** mix 1 part water to one part white vinegar. Take a cloth and dip into the solution, blot over the leather lightly to remove the salt. You may have to do this several times to clean the entire surface.
- **To remove grease,** simply apply some Talcum powder or corn starch to the spot and let it sit for a few hours. Do not rub it in, simply let the powder or starch absorb the grease and then you can easily wipe it away.



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**Inside this issue you'll find:**

- Drying and Storing Herbs
- Cleaning Corner: Getting Rid of Grease and Sticky Stuff
- Health Advice: Comforting a Friend with Cancer
- Kid Corner: Back to School on a Budget
- Recipe: Popeye Platter
- Rules for Happy Carpools
- Caring for Leather
- August Money-Saving Special

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