

# News

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## BASIL

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Tanner's own backyard garden reflects such an accessible relationship with herbs. Much of what she grows — including, of course, bunches and bunches of basil — is located right behind her kitchen and back porch instead of requiring a lengthy walk to fetch something for lunch or dinner. And instead of long rows, Tanner plants herbs and flowers together in diverse clusters. This is for both aesthetic and practical reasons.

Basil, for example, works as a natural bug repellent (except for bugs particularly attracted to basil). Tanner plants the verdant herb throughout her garden, frequently pairing it with flowers, vegetables and other herbs susceptible to various pests.

One area of her garden, however, is portioned off for the organic basil she sells commercially through local produce outlets like Foot-hills Connect. Because consumers are accustomed to herbs with a perfect appearance, particular care is taken in this section to ward off pests. But rather than discard leaves with holes or other blemishes, Tanner keeps them for personal use.

"Those are ideal for the food processor. I use the crushed leaves for

recipes like pesto and basil oil," Tanner said.

Walking along the path that meanders through her herb garden, Tanner stopped here and there to pluck a fresh sprig of basil. "Smell this! Isn't it wonderful? Basil is such an uplifting herb to work with," she said, breathing deeply into the fragrant herbal bouquet.

She continued along the path before stopping again to cut back a few basil tops. "The minute you see the first flower bud appear, you should top off the plant a few inches to extend the growing period," she advised.

Any basil leaves you don't use right away can be put in a paper towel-lined freezer bag, and then stored in the freezer.

"I actually like cooking with frozen basil more than fresh," Tanner said. "But either way, be sure to put it in your dish right before serving. Otherwise, the heat from cooking dissipates the flavor."

Tanner listed off some of the many ways a home gardener can put the herb to use in the kitchen. Yes, pesto and tomato-based dishes are mainstays, she acknowledged. But basil also makes a fantastic flavoring agent for sugar syrup, which can be used in lemonade, sweet breads, and even cookies.

Steeping basil in olive oil is another diverse culinary use of the herb. The result is a clear, green-tinted oil, with a taste more subtle than expected for such an aromatic herb. It can be drizzled over salads, entries and almost any Italian or other ethnic dish.

As a holistic personal chef, Tanner cooks for a range of clients, including many on restricted diets. "Life doesn't end if you can't have as much salt in your food. You can still get that extra pleasure out of eating with flavorful herbs like basil," Tanner noted.

This leads Tanner to the medicinal properties of basil. An antibacterial, basil in essential oil form can be applied to topical cuts to prevent infection. There are also several preparations of basil that can be used as an insect repellent applied directly to the skin.

One type of the herb, known as "holy" basil, is a stress modulator that lowers cortisol levels and gives adrenal support, which can lessen fatigue and sleep disruption. It can be used in essential oil form, steeped herbal teas, herbal packs, or even as a primary ingredient in natural herbal soaps.

Research also indicates basil has anti-inflammation properties that can one day be used to treat more serious ailments, like rheumatoid



Garrett Byers/Daily Courier

Lemon Basil Limeade with Bee Balm Ice Cubes

### Workshop

Tanner's basil workshop is Saturday, Aug. 25 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The class costs \$40. Call Michele Tanner at 828-287-4959 to register or visit [www.michelesgardenofhealth.com](http://www.michelesgardenofhealth.com) for more information.

arthritis. Specifically, a substance in basil called eugenol inhibits production of an inflammatory enzyme known as cyclooxygenase. This is the same enzyme that pain-blockers like aspirin and

ibuprofen inhibit.

"I hope that one day soon someone figures out how to concentrate basil in a pill that arthritis patients can take instead of pharmaceuticals that ravage the body," Tanner said. "Until then, you can at least eat basil in foods."

### Lemon Basil Limeade with Bee Balm Ice Cubes

#### Ingredients and directions:

2 ounces basil syrup  
1 ounce fresh lemon juice  
1 ounce fresh lime juice  
6 ounces cold water

Add ingredients into pitcher, stir well and refrigerate.

To make Basil Syrup: heat ¾ cup sugar; ¾ cup water; and ¾ cup chopped fresh basil in sauce pan. Stir mixture over medium heat until sugar completely dissolves. Let cool, then strain basil from syrup. To make Bee Balm Ice Cubes: fill miniature plastic Dixie cups with water and one pink Bee Balm flower. Fresh basil can also be substituted for the flowers. Add frozen ice cubes to glasses of limeade. Garnish with additional Bee Balm flowers and basil.

### Basil-Infused Oil

#### Ingredients and directions:

4 cups fresh, finely chopped basil  
Olive oil to cover basil  
Sterilized, one quart-sized mason jar

Place basil in jar and top generously with olive oil. Shake jar vigorously. Place in a cool place for 5-6 weeks, shaking contents of jar every 3 or 4 days. Strain out basil, which can be used in soups, stews and sauces. (Not recommended for pesto recipes, where fresh basil is always best.) If you save the strained basil, you must freeze or refrigerate as it won't keep long out of the oil.

After above preparation, basil-infused oil is shelf stable for three to six months. Refrigerate if kept longer. This recipe is best made in small batches.



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