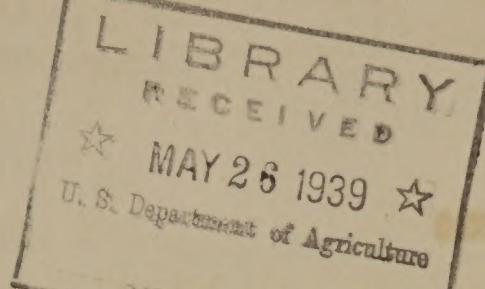


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SAVORY OR AROMATIC HERBS



A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Program, Thursday, May 4, 1939.

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Every mail brings us a bundle of letters asking about the growing of savory herbs. Here is one from New Jersey which reads, "Will you kindly send me all available information about the raising of culinary herbs. Where to procure the seed, how to plant and care for them, and where to sell the dried herbs." And another from far away Oregon reads, "Please send me any bulletins or information on the raising and marketing of herbs. Is there a good market for herbs? I read that we import large quantities of herbs and that their production is a good small business venture."

Ever since the days of Shakespeare, and I presume long before his time, savory herbs played an important part in the flavoring of foods, and today no English or French garden would be considered quite complete without its small nook devoted to the growing of the flavoring herbs. Recently there have appeared in the magazines of this country articles suggesting the growing of herbs as a side line as a means of securing added income. Some of these writers have apparently confused the herbs used in medicine with the savory or aromatic herbs used in cookery and flavoring.

In order to correct any misunderstanding that may have arisen in the minds of any of you, I wish to state that within the past five years there has been a great revival of interest in the growing of savory herbs, especially in home gardens, and in a few cases their commercial production has become rather important. I want to make it clear that there is no widespread demand or established market for these herbs, and that a very small space of ground will produce all that can be sold in any one locality. Dried herbs used for seasoning are usually kept on the pantry shelf, and a mere pinch is all that is needed for flavoring a stew or some dish being prepared for the table.

Many of the so-called savory herbs do have a medicinal value, and on checking over a list of sixty of these herbs, I find that nearly thirty have some use in medicine. Practically all of these can be grown in this country, but the demand for them in medicine is so limited that a relatively few acres will supply that demand. We do import considerable quantities of herbs used in medicine, most of them cannot be grown in this country at all, or are not likely to prove profitable.

There are about ten or twelve of the savory herbs that I would suggest for growing in the home garden with the possible thought of having a surplus of some of them to sell. These are Anise and Caraway for their seeds; Basil for its leaves which are used for flavoring soups and meats; Chives, those mild-flavored little onions that are so fine chopped on salads; Coriander, for its seeds which are used the same as the seeds of Caraway; Dill, for its seeds and for flavoring pickles; Sweet Marjoram, the leaves being used for flavoring soups; Mint for flavoring ice tea and other cold drinks, also for flavoring lamb; Parsley for garnishing and for use in making parsleyed potatoes, also in

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soups and stews; Sage for flavoring meats; Summer Savory, the young, tender leaves being used for flavoring; Thyme, for its splendid fragrance and its use as a flavoring. All of these are adapted for the home garden.

We do not have a bulletin on the culture of savory herbs, but Farmers' Bulletin No. 663, "Drug Plants Under Cultivation," contains information on the culture of a number of the savory herbs that are used both as flavoring and in medicine.

My purpose in presenting this matter today is to dispel any idea that the growing of savory or aromatic herbs is a highly profitable venture, that on the contrary the demand is limited and the market has to be largely created.

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