The Indoor Gardeners' Guide to Making the Most of Winter

GARANTIA®

Making the most of your garden

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Introduction:

It would be easy to take zero accountability for what you spend your time doing this winter, instead choosing to hang on to every last word that our Prime Minister says in one of his many briefings to inform the country what we can and cannot do as part of a Covid-Christmas. Well, we've decided that's no way to live, and we're encouraging anyone and everyone we speak to, to make the most of whatever this winter has to offer. To take personal responsibility for making the most of the next few months.

As gardeners, as most of our followers are, we know how restricting winter can be, and we're at the mercy of whatever the weather may be as to how much we can enjoy our time outside. Of course, walks in the rain are a must for any outdoor person, and you'll have plenty of opportunities to enjoy those over the next few weeks and months! But what do you do when you're indoors? What is there to entertain yourself with? To spend your time learning or enjoying? To get fully involved with so that you can look forward to jumping out of bed in the morning, even if it's cold and wet outside, and you're stuck in the confines of your own home as the office is still closed or you're currently in between jobs.

Well, in this short guide we've got a few ideas you could get stuck into. To keep any winter blues at bay and to have something you can look back on with pride when we reach sunnier days in 2021.

Imagine starting the new year with your own indoor herb garden. With freshly home-grown herbs adding a delicious aroma to your kitchen, there at the ready to be tossed into your homemade creations for your in-home dining experience. Questioning why you ever ate-out as much as you used to and thinking to yourself that restaurants are seriously going to have to up their game if they're ever going to exceed the delights that you're now cooking for yourself and your family.

Outside of the kitchen your home could be filled with the indoor plants you're growing and excitedly nurturing, looking forward to the colourful addition they're soon to make to your home.

Perhaps you've also spent time flower arranging, and instead of hopping onto Interflora when you need birthday gifts next year, you'll be making your own beautiful arrangements and impressing all your friends and family with this new talent that you've honed over the winter.

If any of this inspires you, then read on to learn more. Let the next few months be a defining time in your life. A time you look back on with warm feelings and pride. A time that you took accountability and decided you were going to make the most of. To get something from. A time when so many other people put their lives on hold, moaning and whinging about all the things they weren't able to do, whilst you were growing. You were improving. ***You were having fun!***

Chapter 1

Best herbs to grow indoors

At a time when 'eating in' would appear to be the new 'eating out', what better thing to have within arms reach than fresh home-grown herbs to spice up your in-home dining experience. With restaurants either closed or running at a much-reduced capacity to enable social distancing this winter, you may find yourself cooking for yourselves at home daily, leaving the dining out experiences until safer, more comfortable times in 2021.

As for anything we do daily, after a while, it can get repetitive, and things can lack excitement when carried out consistently, day after day. Which means you have to be proactive to add some variety!

Getting hands-on with your herb growing, rather than simply adding them to your weekly supermarket shopping list, will make this both exciting and fulfilling as they grow over time. It's also the perfect thing to spend some time doing during the winter because it can be done from the comfort of your own home, rather than out in the elements.

So, having recently planted seeds into a couple of our Urban raised bed planters, we can tell you which herbs are showing good, early signs of growth. Plus, which are the most likely to grow well over the next few months so that you can start to include them in your recipes sooner rather than later.

Having grown some of our own fruit & veg for the first time earlier this year, we can tell you it's extremely satisfying to eat your own harvest. Somehow the food tastes better when you're responsible for its life from day one! Fulfilment, satisfaction, pride, are all emotions heading your way if you join us on this journey of starting your own indoor herb garden this winter.



Get hands on with indoor herb growing!

Which herbs are growing quickest?

Dill, Parsley, Chives and Cress are all showing the first signs of early growth, within just weeks since the seeds were planted.

Which herbs grow well indoors in the winter?

Oregano, Chives, Mint, Rosemary and Thyme. All of these will do well in winter and are regularly used in all sorts of dishes, so extremely handy to have freshly grown in your kitchen.

After a few minutes spent online, you can have herb seeds ordered and on their way to you, pretty much on a next-day basis. Then, either find yourself some old pots that would be ideal for your herbs to grow in or of course you can invest in a **Garantia Urban raised bed planter**, which will perfectly sit either on a large bay window-ledge or on the legs it comes with close to a door or window, to enjoy the direct sunlight that it will need to bring the seeds to life and start the process. You can be up and running within 2 to 3 days and then it's just a matter of thyme ***(excuse the pun, couldn't resist it!)***.



Chapter 2

Caring for indoor plants during winter

Just as caring for yourself during winter can be more of a challenge than during spring and summer, the same can certainly be true for your plants. Just like any other living thing, it should be expected that your plants are going to react differently in winter than they do in summer.

One thing none of us wants this winter is to lose a plant we love. So, the best thing you can do is educate yourself on what you need to do to best look after your plants this winter, which could be very different to the way you've been caring for them in other times of the year.

One bad strategy is to continue doing what you've always done and just hope for the best. The 'hope for the best' strategy is never the best strategy. Make the most of the additional time you've got this winter. Time you're not spending travelling or packing for overnight trips, or socialising with friends in pubs and restaurants - and do your own research on how to look after your indoor plants during winter. Google is your friend! Seek, and ye shall find the answers.

To get you started, here are a few tips that should set you off on the right path...

1. Keep plants close to the window. They need light! We all need light in



winter. With the days being much shorter, there is obviously less light to be had, so what little there is we have to make the most of. (This is just as true for us humans as it is our plants by the way!) Position them close to the windows so they can soak up what sunlight there is.

2. Propagate.
Here's something you could get stuck into. This could also be very helpful to any of the indoor plants that you see are struggling. Even if it just turns out to be an insurance policy to save a struggling plant over winter, at least you'll have rescued a part of it so you can resurrect it in better times. Remember that when you make a cutting, take it from the healthy piece of the plant so that you have a better chance for a healthy new plant to grow. Do some proper research too though, to make sure you're doing the right thing for your specific plant.

3. Avoid extreme temperature changes.
Easier said than done at this time of year, but it's something important for you to be aware of. In the same way that you don't like the extremes of temperature in December and January, neither do your plants. Working out how to avoid this isn't easy, but it's important to do what you can.

4. Water less in winter.
Plants only need water based on the amount of light they receive. Therefore, when they receive less sunlight in winter, they need less water in winter as a consequence. And when overwatering is one of the easiest ways to kill a plant, you must be very mindful of this when caring for your indoor plants this winter.



Chapter 3

Why gardening indoors during winter is good for mental health

Our mental health is just as important as our physical health. As there will be less direct contact with others for most of the population during the Covid Pandemic and winter months, there are simple things we can all do to protect our mental well being.

It's important to know that mental well-being fluctuates. Some days are going to feel better than others, which is similar to the weather in many ways. It's bright some days, and other days, it's dull. However, we can't change the weather and sometimes, when we're feeling low, we need to wait until these feelings pass.

Sometimes though, negative thoughts and feelings can linger, and we can feel like it will never end - like being stuck under a low-pressure weather system for days on end. When this happens, we can often get frustrated with these feelings and want to change them.



Luckily, there are things we can do to improve our moods and lessen the chances of feeling low for longer periods of time.

> “Exercise and diet are vital to both physical and mental health and can help us to feel better inside.”

When we move our bodies, get fresh air and eat oxygenated foods and drink revitalising liquids, our bodies release pleasant chemicals such as serotonin and oxytocin. We can get fresh air by walking outside in nature and getting our fingers dirty in the earth.

If the weather gets freezing though, we can also bring our gardens indoors with the Garantia indoor planters and grow our own healthy herbs and vegetables during the winter months.

Just having this connection with the earth and with nature can be enough to give us a body reset and help us to feel more alive.

Also, limit the amount of negativity coming into your home from the news channels. It’s good to stay connected, but news channels thrive on delivering the bad stuff, and too much exposure to this can negatively affect our mental well-being.

As well as getting exercise and eating healthily, limit yourself to a small amount of ‘breaking news’ and choose a good mix of entertainment. Don’t limit this to your TV either, as it’s now possible to stay connected with others online using video conferencing software.

You can share your progress on how you and others are getting along growing your herbs indoors and go on social meet-up groups for indoor gardeners such as this one: **https://www.meetup.com/topics/indoor-plants-and-plant-care/** And we would love to stay in touch with you and see how your growth is going.

Send us your images to this email [info@garantiauk.co.uk] or tag us on social media using this hashtag #indoorgardeners.

Chapter 4

Flower arranging tips and helpful hints

Follow these top tips for arranging flowers to get the most from your cut flowers...

Re-cut the stems at a 45-degree angle. This allows more surface area for the stems to drink.

After conditioning flowers by cutting the stems at an angle & leaving them in water for at least a couple of hours to drink, you can then start to arrange them.

When arranging flowers in floral foam, place the foam in deep water until it is completely soaked (this takes a maximum of a minute depending on the size required for your container). Please don't push the foam down as it creates air bubbles.

Make sure that the foam sits proud of your container by 3-5cms. This will enable you to angle the stems downwards & give a more natural look.

Use a variety of flowers & foliage with different textures & forms to add interest to the arrangement.
Remove all foliage from the stems that will be below the waterline, as they will start to rot.

Ideally use three different types of flowers, being focal flowers, secondary flowers (slightly smaller) & fillers, which would be smaller still.

Leave space between flowers by placing your foliage in between them. That way, you get to see the individual beauty of each flower.

There are certain colours that always look good together. One of my favourite colour harmonies, is Complementary. These are colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel shown here:



Two examples that I have made to demonstrate this are below:



A few tips to remember:
Add flower food to a vase of water. It will give the flowers a boost, rather like drinking Red Bull! It improves the longevity of the flowers (never add flower food to Sunflowers - it will kill them!) Don't place them near a direct heat source such as a radiator or near drafts. Change the water every 3 days to get the maximum life from your flowers.

For more information about other Colour Harmonies & for lots of useful information on how to arrange flowers search for ***"The Elements & Principles of Design in Floristry"*** which gives detailed information on how best to produce a variety of designs.

Chapter 5

5 Best Recipes to use your home-grown herbs in this winter

Once your indoor herb garden is in full bloom, you'll be wondering what recipes you can get making to put them to good use.

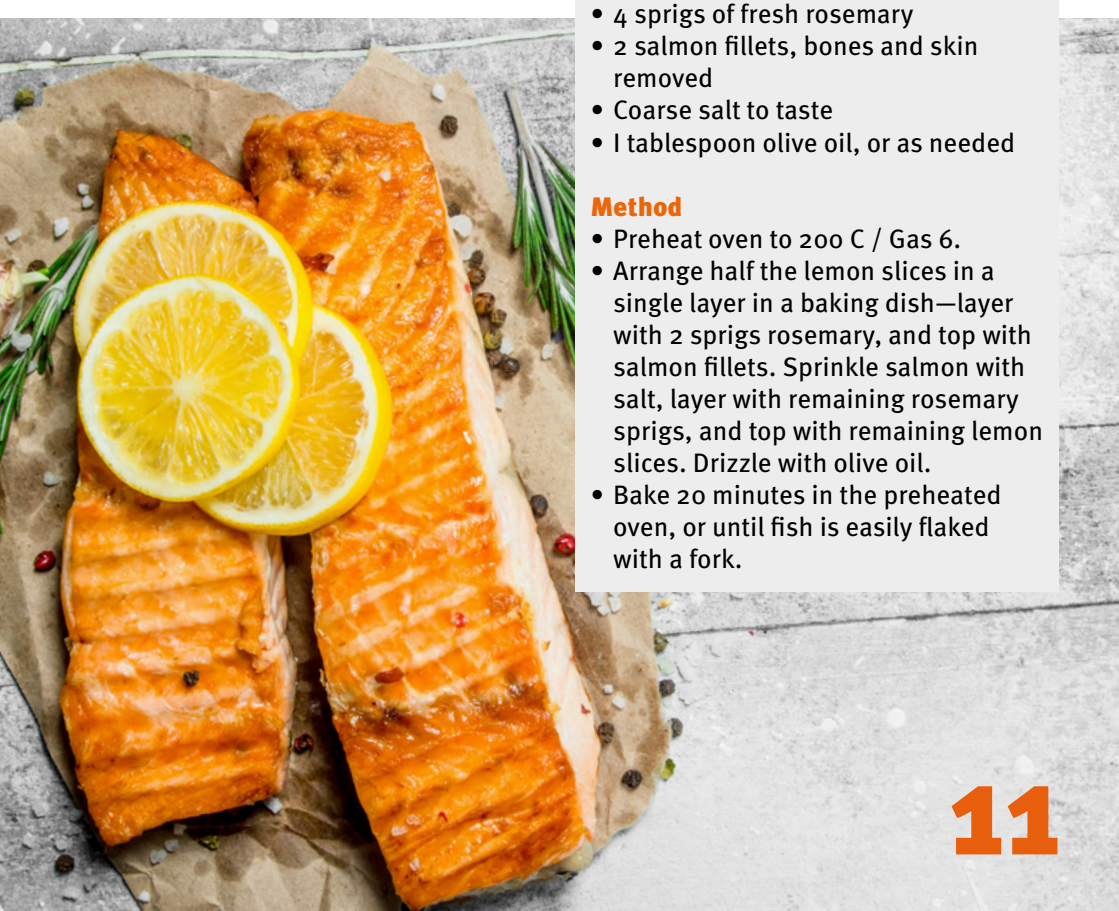
Well, here's a selection of some of our favourites, which you might want to give a go to impress at your next dinner party...

1.
Lemon Rosemary Salmon

- 1 Lemon, thinly sliced
- 4 sprigs of fresh rosemary
- 2 salmon fillets, bones and skin removed
- Coarse salt to taste
- I tablespoon olive oil, or as needed

Method

- Preheat oven to 200 C / Gas 6.
- Arrange half the lemon slices in a single layer in a baking dish—layer with 2 sprigs rosemary, and top with salmon fillets. Sprinkle salmon with salt, layer with remaining rosemary sprigs, and top with remaining lemon slices. Drizzle with olive oil.
- Bake 20 minutes in the preheated oven, or until fish is easily flaked with a fork.



2.
Spiced Mint Tea

- 3 cups of water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 whole cloves
- 2 whole allspice
- 1 cup fresh mint leaves
- Honey, optional

Method

- Place the water, cinnamon, cloves and allspice in a large saucepan.
- Bring to a boil. Boil for 1 minute.
- Stir in mint leaves.
- Remove from the heat; cover and steep for 5 minutes.
- Strain tea.
- Serve with honey if desired.

3.
Hazlenut & Oregano Pasta

- 180g linguine or spaghetti
- 50g blanched hazelnuts, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- Fresh oregano, leaves picked
- 1 lemon, zested
- 100ml double cream
- 30g parmesan, finely grated

Method

- Cook the pasta for 1 min less than pack instructions.
- Meanwhile, toast the hazelnuts in a dry frying pan over medium heat then, once golden, add the oil, garlic, oregano and three-quarters of the lemon zest. Stir so that everything is well coated, cook for 30 secs or so, then stir in the cream and take off the heat.
- Drain the pasta straight into the frying pan, adding a little of the cooking water to the pan. Stir through the cheese, season well with black pepper, then toss everything together and serve immediately with the remaining lemon zest scattered over the top.



4.
Braised Dill Potatoes

- 1 pound of new/baby potatoes
- 1 cup of chicken broth
- 1 tbsp butter
- 3 tbsp snipped fresh dill
- Pinch salt & pepper
- 2 tbsp soured cream

Method

- In a large saucepan, arrange potatoes in a single layer. Add broth and butter. Cover and cook over medium-high heat for 12 minutes
- Uncover; cook until potatoes are tender and the broth is evaporated, 7-10 minutes. Press each potato with a turner to crush slightly. Sprinkle evenly with the dill, salt and pepper. Cook until bottoms are lightly browned, 2-3 minutes longer. Serve with sour cream.



5.
Roast Chicken with Thyme and Onions

- 2 lemons
- 2.5-pound whole chicken
- 2 large onions, peeled and quartered
- 6 shallots, coarsely chopped
- 8 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Cup butter, softened
- 8 sprigs fresh thyme

Method

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Lightly grease a medium baking dish.
- Pierce lemons several times with a fork, and place 1 inside each chicken cavity. Arrange chickens in the centre of the prepared baking dish: place onions, shallots, and garlic around the chickens. Sprinkle vegetables with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Spread butter over the chickens, and line each with thyme sprigs.
- Bake 20 minutes in the preheated oven. Increase temperature to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C), and continue baking 30 minutes, or until the exterior of chicken is golden brown, meat is no longer pink, and juices run clear. Allow cooling about 15 minutes before serving.



Thanks for joining us!

We hope you get some value from this guide and get involved in some of these suggestions to make the most of your winter. We'll be acting on a lot of these suggestions and sharing our progress in our Facebook Group **'Let's Grow Together'** which you'll find on our Garantia UK page. Please come and join us! We're building a community and we'd love to have you come and join the conversation. It's a great place to share your creations and also get inspiration from others. We're all in it together, this winter more than most, so come and join us so you can help other like-minded people make the most of their winter too.