Gourmet Chia® Herb Garden

with Wonder Soil Expanding Wafers

before

after

PLANTING & GROWING INSTRUCTIONS
GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Congratulations! You are the owner of CHIA TERRA COTTA HERB GARDEN®, the indoor herb growing kit now featuring Wonder Soil Expanding Wafers with water saving crystals.

Following is a general guide to start planting. Please see next section for more detailed information to ensure your success.

1. Place plastic liners and pots into each saucer.
2. Place the three Wonder Soil wafers into a waterproof container and add 1-1/2 cups of water. The wafers will expand into a nutrient filled growing mix. If there are any pieces of wafers left, add a little more water as necessary. Stir the growing mix and place into the three pots, reserving about a tablespoon of growing mix.
3. Gently tap the top of the growing mix in each pot to level.
4. Select the three seed varieties you want to plant. Save the other seed packets for another use.
5. Sprinkle the entire packet of seeds into each pot and gently cover seeds with reserved growing mix.
6. Place appropriate plant marker in each pot.
7. Place pots in a warm location.
8. Check plants daily to make sure that the growing mix is moist. Add water as necessary.

GROWING HERBS WITH GOURMET CHIA HERB GARDEN

Chia Terra Cotta Herb Garden® contains six different seed varieties. You choose which four varieties you would like to grow to create your own personal gourmet herb mix. We do not recommend planting more than one herb variety per pot. Save the remaining two varieties for another use.

Simply add water (1/2 cup per wafer) to the Wonder Soil Expanding wafers. The wafers will expand creating a premium organic growing mix containing coir, kelp powder, worm castings, Mycorrhiza and other natural nutrients, promoting better seed germination and root development for stronger, healthier plants.

Wonder Soil also contains water saving crystals that absorb water and releases it slowly back to the plant roots when the soil becomes too dry.
Although Wonder Soil will stay moist longer than traditional potting soils or germinating mixes, please check your plants regularly (especially during the first weeks) to make sure the plants do not dry out.

To minimize water loss, one suggestion is to cover each pot loosely with plastic wrap. A plastic sandwich bag over each pot is ideal because it will increase the temperature and humidity around the seeds, but will also allow air to circulate around the seeds. This step will encourage quicker seed germination, but is not necessary for success. As an alternative to plastic wrap, you can remove the bottom from empty 1 gallon plastic milk containers to create domes to place over your potted plants. Keep the top of the milk containers open to allow the air to circulate.

You do not need sunlight at this stage. Your herb seeds will germinate at different rates. Depending upon the conditions in your home, Marjoram and Basil should germinate within 5 days, Dill within 8 days, Parsley within 10 days and Cilantro and Chives within 14 days. Once seeds germinate, move the plants to an area with a lot of light. The best light source will be from a south-facing window. If your window does not provide at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day, you must supplement with artificial lighting. See Herb Maintenance Requirements for more information. You can leave the plastic over the plants until the plants reach 1-2" tall. Gradually remove the plastic for a couple of hours each day for a week before taking it off completely. This will allow your plants to adjust to their new environment gradually. When plants receive their first true leaves, it is time to add plant food to their diet. There are many good plant foods available at your local nursery. See Herb Maintenance Requirements for more information.

**HERB MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Once seeds germinate, there are a number of factors the indoor gardener must address for herbs to thrive. Growing herbs indoors is different than outdoor gardening. Please adhere to the following maintenance requirements for best results.

Light. Herb plant seedlings need a lot of light. If herb plants do not receive sufficient light, they will grow thin and leggy. Their color will be pale green to yellow. If the light source is not strong enough, your herb plants will stretch and bend toward the light. Select a south-facing window that will receive a minimum of 6 hours of direct light per day. Be sure that the reflected heat from the window is not too
strong. Rotate plants every three days to balance growth. Depending upon where you live, or the time of year you plant your Chia Herb Garden®, you may need to supplement or substitute artificial light for sunlight. There are many plant "grow light" bulbs for this purpose. A standard fluorescent, two-tube, cool white bulb fixed over your plants for 14 hours a day will also work.

**Moisture.** Your plants may require water each day depending upon the conditions in your home.

**Feeding.** Wondersoil has natural ingredients such as worm castings and kelp which will provide nutrition to your plants for four months. After this time, you may supplement your plants’ diet with additional organic fertilizers, however, as herb plants mature, you do not want to overfeed your plants. Plant food will make the leaves large and lush, but will not produce as much of the concentrated oils that give herbs their distinct flavor and aroma. A whitish residue may form on the outer surface of the pots when you feed your plants. This is an accumulation of salts from the plant food and is a normal occurrence with clay pots. Simply wipe it off the pots. It will not affect the growing of your herb plants.

**Plant Thinning.** Basic gardening philosophy dictates aggressive thinning of plant seedlings. "Thinning" is the removal of seedlings to avoid overcrowding, so the plants will not have to compete for space and nutrients. Harvesting young herb seedlings is an effective way to thin your plants.

**Humidity and Air Circulation.** Herbs will grow best in environments of high humidity. You can increase the humidity around your plants by frequent mistings. Herb plants require fresh, circulating air. Increase the air flow around your plants by opening a nearby window, but do not subject your plants to a draft. Stale, stagnant air may harbor pests and diseases.

**Temperature.** Herbs will grow successfully in daytime temperatures of 65°F. and nighttime temperatures of 55-60°F. Remember that the temperatures near your window may not match the temperatures in your home. Temperatures near a window tend to be higher than room temperature during the day and lower during the night.

**Pests.** Young, tender herb plants are susceptible to insects. Yellow mottled leaves are signs of infestation. If insects attack your plants, DO NOT use dangerous chemicals. You can wash your plants with a very mild soap water solution, taking care to rinse the herb leaves thoroughly to remove soap residue. In addition, cut off heavily
infested areas. Do not place your herb plants near other plants that may be infested.

**HARVESTING**

The reward of herb gardening is having fresh, flavorful herbs available at your fingertips whenever you want them. All of the herbs contained in this kit will have flavor throughout the growing season that they can be picked at any time. Trim Cilantro, Dill and Parsley leaves as needed. Frequent picking and snipping of branches will encourage new growth on your Basil, Chives and Marjoram plants. Basil, Cilantro Dill and Parsley are annuals, which means that their lifespan is one season. Chives and marjoram are perennials, which means that with proper care, they should last for many years. Extend the life of all your herb plants by removing flower buds that may develop.

**TRANSPLANTING**

You can transplant your plants from their clay pots into larger pots or to a sunny location in your garden. Plants will be able to grow to their full potential when transplanted outdoors in the ground.

Before transplanting your plants outdoors, you must let the plant adjust to the environment of its future new home. For one week, allow your plant to spend some time outside. Set your plant outside for one hour the first day. Increase the amount of time each day so that by the end of the week, your plant has been outside the entire day. If the weather is particularly warm, shade new transplants against the sun.

**ABOUT YOUR HERBS**

**Sweet Basil, *Ocimum basilicum* – Annual**

Basil has shiny green leaves that are 1-2 inches long. Basil grows quickly. Frequent cutting of leaves and branches will encourage plant to become bushy and full. Basil plants benefit from aggressive thinning. Snip leaves and plants as needed. Gradually thin plants to four strong plants. The leaves are easily bruised, and must be handled with care. In the garden, basil can grow to 2 feet high and will spread rapidly. To encourage new growth, cut leaves and flowerbuds. Do not cut off more than 2/3 of the plant at any given time. Make sure at least 4 leaves remain each time you cut your plants. Sweet basil has a spicy, sweet aroma as it grows and lends a distinct flavor to pestos, tomato sauces, vegetables, soups, eggs, and most Italian recipes.
Chives, *Allium schoenoprasum* – Perennial
Chive leaves are slender, hollow and have a light onion flavor. The plants are very hardy, and can be cut at the surface and they will grow back fuller. Chives grow in grass-like clumps. Use chives as often as there is growth to use. This will encourage more shoots to develop. In your garden, Chives prefer full sun and will grow up to two feet. If allowed to bloom, they will produce large, pink edible blossoms. The pompom-shaped flowers also make attractive additions to floral arrangements. The mild onion-like flavor of the Chive leaves lends itself well to salads, soups, egg dishes, potatoes and flavored vinegars.

Cilantro, *Coriandrum sativum* – Annual
Cilantro plants are unique as their leaves and seeds are used for different purposes. The leaves are called Cilantro; the seeds known as Coriander, Cilantro has one main flowering stem. Leaves from this stem are oval with toothed edges; leaves from side branches can become lacy and fern-like. Snip leaves and branches as needed. As flowering stalks develop, cut them off to extend the life of your plants. In the garden, plants reach 18 inches. Although the plant will go to seed after several months, full hot sun encourages Cilantro to go to seed more quickly.

The pungent leaves of Cilantro are perfect for Mexican and Oriental recipes, as well as poultry dishes.

Dill, *Anethum graveolens* – Annual
Dill is a favorite of many gardeners due to its flavorful and attractive feathery foliage. Snip dill leaves frequently to discourage this herb and to control growth. If you don't cut Dill leaves frequently, the plant will quickly outgrow the pot. When transplanted outside, Dill can grow up to 4 feet. In addition to the tasty leaves, Dill produces yellow, umbrella-shaped flowers, which produce the seeds. The leaves of Dill are delicate and add a distinct flavor to salads, seafoods and soups.

Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum* – Annual
Curled Parsley is a hardy plant whose ruffled leaves are beautiful and flavorful at all growth stages. The leaves become tufted and have serrated edges. Trim leaves as needed. Parsley is an ideal container plant since it grows slowly. When transplanted outside, Parsley is often used for both ornamental and culinary purposes. Fresh Parsley is used as a garnish and to add a peppery flavor to such foods as vegetables, meats, stews, potatoes and marinades.
Sweet Marjoram, *Origanum majorana* – Perennial

Marjoram leaves are small and oval. When mature the leaves are light green on top and gray green on the underside. Marjoram is very slow-growing. Allow all plants to develop side shoots. Snip Marjoram as needed. The branches are very delicate until the plant matures. In the garden, Marjoram can grow up to 2 feet in full sun or partial shade. When mature, small white flowers grow from the clusters of tiny leaves at the tips of stems. Sweet Marjoram is used in salads, cooked vegetables, poultry, seafood stuffing and sauces.

### R E C I P E S

Using herbs in your cooking is an adventure. You are not limited to associating individual herbs with specific foods. Fresh herbs have the unique ability to impart special flavor to food. Learn each herb’s taste and texture characteristics and experiment freely. Here are some recipes and cooking ideas incorporating herbs with food.

**Herbed Butter**

*Herbed Butters are great served as a spread for bread or a topping for pastas, fish and meats. Also try using herbe’d butter when grilling corn on the cob or other vegetables You can use one or more herbs as desired.*

1/4 cup sweet or unsalted butter, softened  
1 Tbsp. fresh herbs, minced

Mix the butter and herbs together until smooth. Press butter mixture into a small container, or refrigerate to slightly firm butter and shape into balls. Chill herbed butter for 3 hours to allow flavors to mix.

**Herbed Cheese**

*By adding herbs and seasonings to different types of cheese, you can create a variety of spreads, dips and cheese logs. Following is a very basic cream cheese-based spread that can also double as a dip by adding a little more sour cream Experiment making herbed cheese logs by combining Feta or Cheddar Cheese and fresh herbs.*

1 cup cream cheese, softened  
2 Tbsp. sour cream  
2 Tbsp. minced fresh herbs

Combine all ingredients until smooth. Chill for 8 hours to blend flavors. Allow to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving.
Herbed Vinegars

Herbs will mellow vinegar and impart its individual flavors. Herbed vinegars make a great gift. Use herb vinegars in place of unfavored vinegars to add a special flavor to your favorite recipe.

1/2 cup fresh herb leaves and branches
1 pint vinegar (white, wine or malt varieties)

Place herb leaves and branches in a glass container and cover completely with vinegar. Seal the container with a non-metal stopper. Allow vinegar to age for two weeks in a warm location. Check after several days to make sure that herbs are always covered with vinegar. Taste for desired strength. Add more herbs or vinegar as desired and allow to age for two more weeks. Once the vinegar has reached its desired strength, remove the herbs.

Herbed Oil

The procedure for Herbed Oil is similar to herbed vinegars. Use a quality olive oil in place of the vinegar. Herbed oil is great in your favorite recipes or served alone with French bread.

Herbed Packets in Foil

When you cook food in foil, you are using the liquid in your ingredients to steam all of your flavors together. Food cooked in foil retains natural juices and maximizes moistness. Combining herbs in your foil packets will impart a delicious fresh flavor. You are only limited to your imagination. On a square piece of foil, combine any type of meat, chicken or fish, fresh chopped herbs, seasonings and vegetables. Wrap the ingredients in the foil carefully. Bake in 350° oven or on top of bar-b-que until done. Meat thickness and selection will vary cooking times. Food cooks quickly. Check after 10 minutes.