



A37 Making a herb spiral



Herb spirals offer a beautiful and practical way of growing herbs. The upward spiral lets you fit in more plants than a flatter space. The spiral also has areas of sun and free draining soil at the top, with damper, shadier areas lower down to suit herbs with different requirements. See S3.5 for example herbs. This activity shows a herb spiral built at The Lancaster Girls Grammar School.

Resources

- Materials including cardboard, stones, topsoil, compost, herbs
- Tools including shovels, wheelbarrows, trowels

Activity

- 1 Prepare the site; clear weeds/grass as described in A14.
- 2 Design your herb spiral.
 - a Consider the materials needed/available, including their cost and environmental impact of sourcing/transport.
 - b Make the spiral no wider than is easy to reach the centre for picking herbs.
- 3 Follow instructions on the next page for setting up and planting a herb spiral. Spring is the best time so plants can establish quickly.

Top tip



Other ways to grow herbs

Containers: on paved/tarmac areas around school. Plant smaller herbs together in larger containers, such as thyme, chives and marjoram. Position larger herbs at the back/centre of a container or in their own larger pot, eg bay and rosemary.

Doors and walkways: for convenient access from kitchens and classrooms, even better when people brush past plants to release the wonderful aroma.

Beds: experiment with layout, eg use maths to create symmetrical design, such as circles. Use raised beds for convenient picking height.

Extended activity

Ask pupils whether they recognise aromas from different herbs and can suggest uses. Often pupils are surprised by how many herbs they already eat/use without even realising.

Health & Safety

Follow Manual Handling guidelines (SG1.3) when moving stones, heavy bags or wheelbarrows full of soil. Ensure adult supervision, especially when stones are built higher. Wear gloves to protect from rough stone edges. See also S3.5 about using herbs.

See also *Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)*

Further information

A14 Clearing weeds and grass

S3.5 Growing herbs

Food Growing Instruction Cards

'New Book of Herbs', by Jekka McVicar. ISBN 1405305797

Instructions for making a herb spiral

- 1** Mark out the area for the spiral. Lay sheets of cardboard as a mulch to stop weeds (A14) and for drawing the spiral.
- 2** Start laying stones to build up the spiral, laying bigger stones at the bottom. Use small stones to wedge larger stones to stop them wobbling.
- 3** Build the spiral up in layers. Position stones to keep each layer relatively flat so the following layer is more stable.
- 4** Start filling the spiral with soil, gently firming in layers. Leave soil to settle for a week before planting. Add a shovelful of compost per square metre for herbs that benefit from extra nutrition.
- 5** Lay out your herbs before planting. Position plants in the spiral based on the drier/wetter soil, aspect and expected height/spread of each plant. Combine different colours and habits. Ask plant nurseries for advice and see Food Growing Instruction Cards.

