



## Planning an herb spiral

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This winter, I read the Permaculture bible, "Gaia's Garden". I got a lot of ideas, many of which will need more time to incubate, and probably a bigger yard, but the first one I will be implementing is an "Herb Spiral". Since we moved in, the "herb garden", if you can call it that, is a narrow strip of mostly-shaded dirt between a gigantic Rhododendron the size of a small bus and an even taller Japanese maple tree (both are probably north of 100 years old). Next to a 6 foot tall solid fence, and banked by a pair of wisteria ... trees? The herb garden is there, well, because the previous owner started some chives there, and mint, which is now nearly gone. I think I'll let the mint return, it doesn't stand much of a chance of spreading in that spot, due to the shade, anyway.

Needless to say, our kitchen is missing a proper herb garden. This has been on my mind as a puzzle to solve for about a year now, and when I read about the herb spiral in Gaia's Garden, I knew it to be the right solution to the problem. Right outside our back door is a concrete path that wraps around the house, and it has this perfect curve framing the lawn. I couldn't wait for the snow to melt to figure out if it was actually going to work! With leftover rocks from a stone wall project, we laid out the spiral and have been living with it for the past two weeks to make sure it's not going to adversely effect our path to the main kitchen garden. And I have to say, it doesn't. It's going to be great! Sometime in the next week or so, we will build the center up into a mound to create multiple microclimates for the different herbs to enjoy.

There are several reasons to plant your herbs in a spiral. First, it's interesting and beautiful. Second, it's convenient, bringing some of the herbs up closer to standing height for less bending. Third, it creates about a dozen microclimates for the different herbs. Rosemary, for example, likes full sun, and well-drained soil. It goes right on top of the mound Parsley prefers partial shade and more moisture, it goes on the bottom, north side. Oregano and Thyme, more moisture but full sun, so they get the southern slope. By organizing the plantings of the herbs in height and orientation to the sun and the central mound, each plant can be given the conditions that they prefer, and yet all be right outside the back door when it's time for that pinch when you're cooking.

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