

Herb Windowsill Garden: Fresh Basil, Mint, and Chives All Winter Long

Gardening | All Year | Ages 6-10

We started our windowsill herb garden in November, and by January my daughter was snipping basil for pizza night like she'd invented Italian cuisine. Here's the thing: herbs grow fast, taste way better than store-bought, and give kids real cooking responsibility. No yard required.

What You Need

- 3-4 small pots with drainage holes (4-6 inches wide work great)
- Potting soil — not garden dirt, which gets too dense
- Herb plants: basil, mint, and chives are bulletproof starters
- Saucers or trays to catch water
- A sunny windowsill (south-facing is ideal, but west works too)
- Kid-safe scissors

We grabbed our plants at The Gardener in Brookside. They have healthy starts year-round and actual humans who'll tell you which basil variety won't die immediately.

How to Set It Up

Fill each pot about three-quarters full with potting soil. Let your kid do this part — it's messy and fun. Gently remove each herb from its nursery container and nestle it into the pot. Fill around the sides with more soil and pat it down. Not too hard. You're tucking it in, not making concrete.

Water until it drips out the bottom. Put the pots on your sunniest windowsill. Done.

Daily Care (aka The Easy Part)

Check soil every 2-3 days by poking a finger in. Dry? Water it. Still damp? Leave it alone. Overwatering kills more herbs than neglect does.

Herbs need 4-6 hours of sunlight. If your windows face north or you're dealing with our grey February stretch, grab a cheap grow light. We stuck one on a timer — herbs get light, we don't think about it.

The Harvest (Where Kids Get Hooked)

Once plants are bushy, start snipping. Basil and mint: pinch off the top sets of leaves just above where two side stems meet. This makes them grow more, not less. Chives: cut stems near the base with scissors.

Our rule: you pick it, you rinse it, you add it to dinner. My son dumps mint in lemonade. My daughter makes "fancy butter" with chives. They're insufferable about it. I love it.

What Actually WorksMint grows like a weed. You'll have too much. Make tea, toss it in smoothies, give bunches to neighbors.

Basil gets leggy fast. Pinch those tops every week even if you don't need basil. Freeze extras in ice cube trays with olive oil — instant flavor bombs for winter soups.

Chives are the participation trophy of herbs. They grow, they taste good, they forgive everything.

Start here. Branch out later. Your windowsill has room.

