

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 15, 1951

### **What Makes the Dill In Dill Pickles?**

Mrs. Laura Hartman, chairman of the Northern chapter of the California unit of the Herb Society of America, has left a list of books on the planting, care and use of herbs. Mrs. Hartman and a group from the Society presented a variety of herb plants and cuttings to the Stevenson House garden in Monterey on Wednesday, all of which were named by the donor.

Among the books which herb enthusiasts are urged to read are: "Herbs, How to Grow Them and How to Use them." By Helen Noyes Webster; "Herb Gardening for Flavor and Fragrance" and "Food" by Helen Morganthaw Fox; "Magic Gardens," "Green Enchantment" and others by Clarkson Rosetta; and a variety of publications by Eleanor Rhode Loyal, "British Herbs," Penguin publishers; Irma Mazza (a Berkeley author), and Rose Mathiew.

It is interesting to note in a book entitled "Bible Plants for American Gardens" by Eleanor Anthony King, the following quotation from Matt. 23:23: "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin," and again: "For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs," from Luke II:42.

Dill was praised in ancient days, as it is today, for its warm and stimulating properties. Today it is used in cookery and medicine and is familiar to most of us as the dill in dill pickles. A member of the parsley family, it is an annual or a biennial. It can be used in flavoring soups, in spicing beets and pickles, and in pastry.

Mallow, several plants of which are now in the collection at the Stevenson House, is a strong-growing bushy shrub five feet or more tall, with a tiny flower and gray foliage.

There are more than 50 varieties of mints. They are perennials and grow easily in any good garden soil – preferably in a moist, sunny position. When harvesting, cut after the dew has disappeared, and before the hot sun has taken any of the oil of the leaves. Tie the stems loosely in bunches and hang to dry on strings in an airy room. When dry, place in airtight container to prevent reabsorption of moisture.

There are more than 50 varieties of thyme. Some are erect, some prostrate and some grow in low mounds. Thyme must have light, well drained soil. They like the

fullest of sun and the broadest of space, and are all valuable in cooking. Lemon thyme is very delightful.

Mignonette, heliotrope, lemon verbena, lavender, marjoram, rosemary. In the olden days lavender and sprays of verbena were laid between layers of sheets. Whether rosemary was brought to England by the French at the time of the Conquest in the 11<sup>th</sup> century or sent in the fourteenth century to Queen Philippa, we cannot be sure, writes the author of Green Enchantment. We do know that it was a plant seen at first only in the gardens of royalty and nobility. In an herbal printed in 1550 we may read, in regard to rosemary, "If thou set it in thy garden keep it honestly for it is most profitable."

In Portugal and Scandinavia the rosemary was connected with elves, while in Sicily baby fairies were supposed to sleep in its flowers. A lovely old legend tells us that in the flight from Egypt, the Virgin Mary threw her blue cloak over a bush of rosemary when she lay down to rest. Ever afterwards, in honor of her, the flowers were the heavenly blue of the mantle.

Marjoram is a symbol of happiness. The Greeks planted it on graves and thought that only with it growing there could their dear ones rest in peace and happiness. It is used in soups and salads, in stuffings for meat, and in medicines. There are some 30 species of marjoram.

It will surprise many to know that the geranium is an herb. Parkinson in his "Garden of Pleasant Herbs" published in 1629, wrote that they were great wound herbs (the root is still used medicinally). Our grandmothers knew well the "rose geranium" and when the jar of apple jelly was filled, placed on top a leaf of the variety known as graveolens or the skeleton leave, either of which, when dried, is an addition to any pungent potpourri.

Exit Mrs. Moth. It has been written and tried by the women of long ago that the following mixture of herbs will drive away the moths which are so destructive to furs, blankets and clothing. The recipe is as follows: one half pound each of rosemary and mint, one-fourth pound each of tansy and thyme and two tablespoons of ground cloves, all dried and scattered liberally among the clothes.