

Zilker Botanical Garden

Activity Guide – DIY Salad Dressings

Ages: All ages

Approximate Length: 15 minutes

Objective: Make your own salad dressings at home while engaging your senses and learning more about the herbs and plants growing in your own garden. If not from your garden, then many tasty plants can be found in the grocery store!

Materials:

1. Sealable glass jar
2. ¼ yellow onion
3. 1 garlic clove
4. 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
5. 2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice
6. Large handful of fresh herbs—pick the ones you like best, like:
 - a. Parsley
 - b. Basil
 - c. Thyme
 - d. Mint
 - e. Oregano
 - f. Rosemary
7. ¼ cup olive oil
8. ½ teaspoon salt
9. ¼ teaspoon pepper
10. Blender or food processor

Concept Terms:

1. **Herb** – Any plant or part of a plant used as an ingredient for flavor, fragrance or healing. Herbs and spices are used for the same purpose, which is flavoring, but herbs have generally evolved in more temperate climates and tend to be harvested for their leaves or other vegetative parts – roots, stems and leaves, such as basil, mint, and rosemary, while spices tend to be of a tropical origin and tend to come from floral parts—flowers, fruits, and seeds, such as pepper, sesame seeds, and coriander, which are all fruits or seeds. This is a general rule, though, and there are also vegetative plant parts that we think of as spices, such as ginger (roots) or cinnamon (bark).
2. **Vegetables** – Plants or parts of plants consumed by humans for food that have been cultivated by humans through agriculture for 9,000-12,000 years. A fruit is a seed-bearing structure that develops from the ovary of a flowering plant (apples, cherries, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.), whereas vegetables are all other plant parts, like roots (carrots), stems (asparagus) and leaves (spinach).

Background:

1. Herbs and spices have played crucial roles in the lives of humans throughout history, helping to preserve and flavor food, disguising bad odors and even treating illnesses and injuries!
2. Salad comes from the Latin phrase “herba salta” or “salted herbs,” so called because greens were usually seasoned with dressings containing lots of salt.
3. According to a 2014 Wall Street Journal article, Americans consume salad dressing 38 times a year, with Ranch dressing being the most popular (15 times per year).

Instructions:

1. Decide in advance what kind of herbs you want to include in your dressing by smelling their fragrance.
2. Make sure to clean all your ingredients before mixing.
3. In a blender or food processor, mix all ingredients and blend until smooth.
4. Pour into the sealable jar.
5. Enjoy on a fresh salad immediately, or can be kept refrigerated for 2-4 weeks max.
6. See if you can identify all the herbs on the next sheet!





A

This herb is the main ingredient in pesto, though it loses its flavor quickly when it's cooked or dried. In India, it is sometimes placed in the mouths of the dead to ensure they reach God.



C

In ancient Greece, Olympians wore crowns of this herb and it is also the main ingredient of salsa verde.

D

When in bloom, this plant has a purple flower and it became popular in America after World War II. Also known as the pizza herb.



E

This plant comes in 30 varieties, and is a great low-light ground cover plant. It is used in the treatment of asthma, memory loss, and skin care.

B

This short lived annual has been used to flavor foods for over 5,000 years! It has a pungent odor and tends to be either deeply loved or hated by people.



A - basil B - cilantro C - parsley D - oregano E - mint