

**\*\*ASK THE TAFE TEAM\*\***

**With TAFE Queensland South West Horticulture Teacher, Paul Luck  
21 February, 2017**

**Question:** *What herbs can I plant this time of year in the Ipswich area?*

**Answer:** Whether you're a gourmet cook or an egg on toast kind of person, fresh herbs make just about every dish taste better. If you're thinking about planting an herb garden, it's easy to get started.

First things first, the weather in Ipswich this time of year can be a bit unpredictable. Even though it's finally cooling down from summer, we can still experience warm humid days bringing severe afternoon storms (which cause damage to delicate seedlings and herbs).

Keeping this in mind it is best to sow seeds directly in a shallow seedling tray or small pots before planting into your herb garden. Alternatively you can keep your herbs in small pots on the kitchen windowsill for easy access (just make sure you keep an eye on them). When planting seeds, ensure the container is kept in a protected spot with direct sunlight, and is moist but not too wet.

Seedlings once germinated should be thinned out - discard any seedlings that may be on the small side and keep those which are much more vigorous in their growth. Typically seedlings should be planted into your garden or a larger container when they reach 5 to 10cm in height or when their true leaves start to appear. Also, before planting make sure you incorporate a good quality organic fertiliser (like blood and bone).

Herbs you can plant at this time of year include:

- Basil
- Bay
- Chives
- Lavender
- Lemon balm
- Mint
- Parsley
- Rocket
- Rosemary
- Sage
- Thyme

When planting to make sure you give all seedlings sufficient space for growth. This space will be dependent on each variety of herb. Monitoring your herbs after planting for pests and diseases is also very important.

Don't forget to water your herbs regularly while they're growing and you can look forward to great produce that will make your meals delicious.

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