

Spring Cleaning Tips - Did You Remember These?



When spring arrives, most people can't resist the desire to give their property a thorough cleaning and airing out. Before you get overwhelmed at the thought, plan to take this project one room at a time and make it personal for your place. If you would like a room by room detailed list, check [here](#).

Start at the top and work down

To make this most effective, it is necessary to pick up clutter and move furniture away from the walls. Clean the blades on ceiling fans with a vacuum first and then wipe them down with a non-toxic cleaner. *Be sure to clean the globes and lamp shades of lighting fixtures.* Remove the globes and wash in soapy water, rinse and air dry. Surprisingly, the light in your room will become brighter. While you're up high, use the soft brush on your vac to go over the ceiling. You will be amazed at how much lint sticks to your ceiling, especially if you use the ceiling fans often. From here move to the walls and wash from top to bottom. *Remember to wipe off the switch plates with disinfectant cleaner.* Then go around the room with that soft vac brush and swipe the top edges of baseboards and quarter-round. Now you can vacuum the floor. Follow with a scrubbing if you need to. *Be sure to vacuum/wash air flow registers.*

While the furniture is away from the walls vacuum behind each piece and wipe down the backsides. This is the home of dust bunnies. Take down window treatments and toss them in the dryer with a fabric softener cloth on air fluff setting, no heat.

While the window treatments are down, you can wash the windows. Cloudy, cool temperature days are recommended because these conditions slow evaporation of cleaning products and make seeing the streaks easier. *Vacuum first to clean out dust and debris from window tracks and sills.* Use a microfiber cloth or a small squeegee with a smooth, nick-free, rubber blade. Make your cleaning agent using 1/4 cup rubbing alcohol, 1/3 cup vinegar and 1 cup distilled water. Mix together and pour into a 32 oz spray bottle and shake to mix. Clean from the top down. [READ MORE](#)

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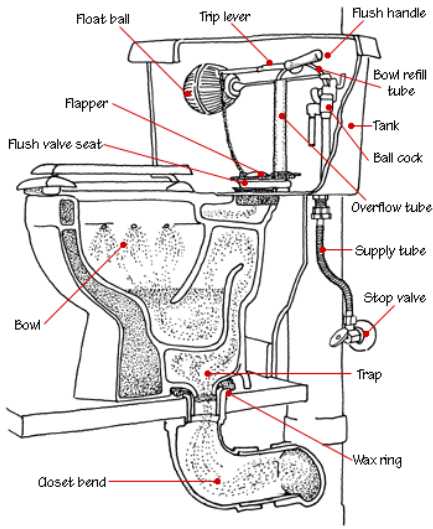
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Home Economics 101 - How Does A Toilet Work?



Do you remember the first time you heard the toilet continue to run and run after flushing? How long did it take you to figure out how to stop it? How does a toilet work anyway? For those who have never figured it out, here's a tutorial.

Toilets, an amazing solution to a never ending need.

The indoor toilet is a marvel of engineering designed to solve the problem of safely removing human waste. It developed along with the modern water/sewer treatment systems to take away waste and not allow methane gases to build up inside the home. The modern toilet consists of two parts: the bowl and the refill water tank. Three systems work together to empty the bowl and refill the water tank: the bowl siphon, the flush mechanism and the refill mechanism.

Photo by HomeTips.com

The bowl, although it contains no moving parts, has a mechanism molded into its design called a bowl siphon. Behind the bowl and connected to the sewer pipe below is a curved pipe (siphon tube) that maintains a continuous water level. When extra water enters the bowl it spills over the edge of the siphon tube and drains away. When you pour a larger amount of water into the bowl, the siphon tube is filled, almost all the water is sucked out of the bowl down the sewer pipe. Once the bowl is empty, air enters the siphon tube and stops the siphoning process.

The tank holds enough water that can activate the siphon when dumped quickly into the bowl. Most tanks can dump their contents in about three seconds. To make this happen, pull down on the handle attached to the tank. The handle is connected to a chain which connects to a flush valve. The chain lifts the flush valve out of the way revealing a 2-3" diameter hole. Uncovering this hole allows the water to enter the rim of the bowl and activate the siphon jet at the bottom of the bowl. It releases most of the water directly into the siphon tube and all the water and waste in the bowl is sucked out. Once the tank has emptied, the flush valve reinstates itself in the bottom of the tank, covering the drain hole and the tank can be refilled.

The refill mechanism has a valve that turns the water on and off. Once the tank has emptied, a part of this mechanism, the filler float, falls activating the filler valve sending water in two directions. Some of the water goes down the refill tube and starts refilling the tank. The rest goes through the bowl refill tube and down the overflow tube into the bowl. As the water level in the tank rises, the float rises far enough to turn off the valve. The bowl slowly refills until the level reaches the top of the siphon tube. [1]

Since proper toilet function is a daily requirement, most homeowners handle toilet repairs themselves. Most repairs are easy to do. You will need a few tools: toilet plunger, pliers, screwdriver and a wrench.

Clearing a clogged toilet is usually accomplished with the use of a plunger or a toilet auger. If the plug is deep inside the drain pipes, a "snake" auger may be required. If you don't own one, call a plumber. There are two common types of blockage: clogs that don't allow waste to leave the bowl or clogs that back up into other fixtures.

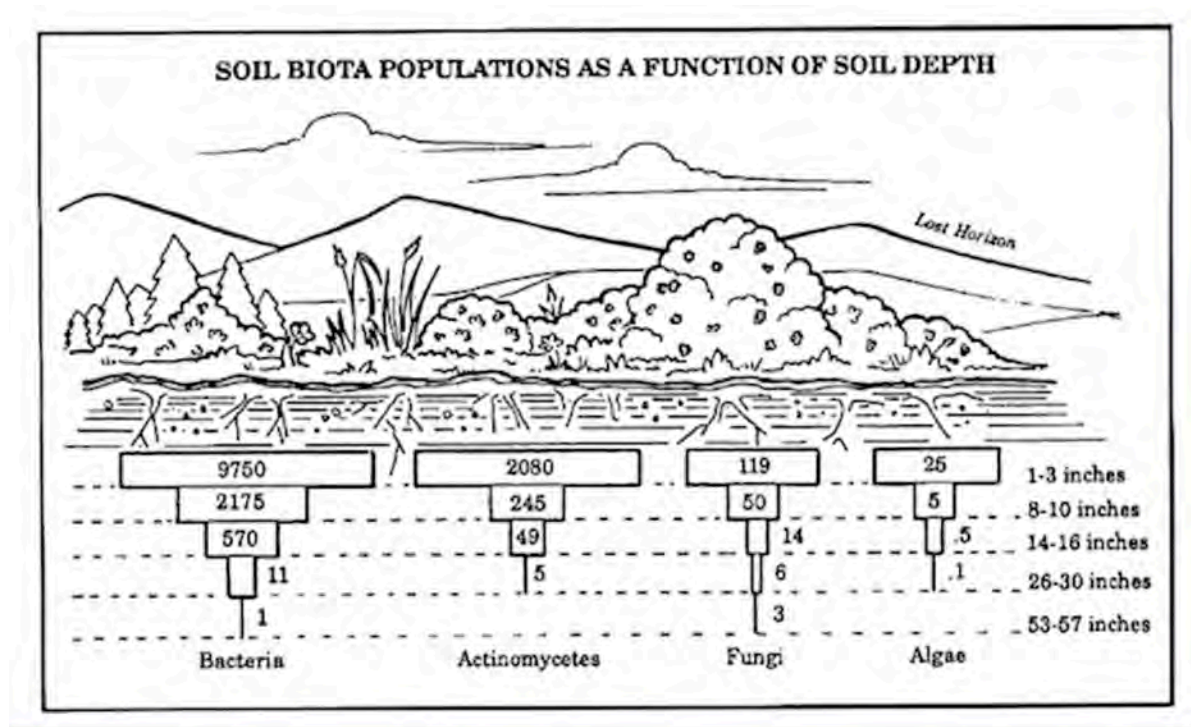
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Understanding Roots: How to Make Your Garden Flourish

Robert Kourik

Listening this week to speakers on Marjorie Wildcraft's Home Grown Food Summit has been a real education. If you haven't taken advantage of this opportunity, visit her [website](#) to get details. One of my favorites with some amazing information is Robert Kourik's talk about Understanding Roots. Here are some of the things he shared.

- Root systems expand much farther than we understand; for years we were thinking that the roots beneath matched the shape of the tree above ground. Research has shown that not to be the case.
- The top two inches of soil has the best stuff and shows 50% more growth than from the next two inches.
- Soil type has a big influence on how roots grow. Roots grow much farther than the drip line; heavy clay soils make tree roots grow not very deep but they may grow 5x farther out.
- Most feeding roots extend past the drip line but like to stay in an aerobic zone to gather nutrients from critters.
- Microorganism populations vary with depth into the soil - aerobic organisms are closer to the surface and anaerobic organisms can be found deeper.



- When planting try not to upheave the soil - break it with a pitchfork, do not turn it upside down. The different microbes will have their life balance upset if they're moved and it takes sometime for them to recover the populations and continue their work of decomposition, etc.
- Roots grow in different direction in different amounts, for example, roots don't expand into compressed soil (like walking paths or roads) and will take the direction of least resistance.
- Often more roots grown on the downhill side of a slope.
- The top 1-2 feet are most critical for nutrient and water absorption; different plants can reach farther down, but the percentage obtained for use is greater near the surface.
- Only about 2% of trees have tap roots; some have sinker roots which grow down from roots that have grown out horizontally first and then grow down.

[MORE](#)

10 Healthy Herbs to Grow and Cook With at Home

REBECCA ANDERSSON, TEAM FOODIE AND COMMUNITY BUILDER
[Azure standard.com](http://Azure.standard.com)



Cooking with the seasons and eating at home is a huge money saver and an excellent way to get all the nutrients your body needs from a seasonally varied diet. To make their cooking even more exciting and healthful, and to save even more money, many Azure customers are growing their own herbs and adding them to their family's meal plan. Herbs are some of the most rewarding plants to grow in a garden, and many grow well in pots as indoor house plants, so there is no reason to be intimidated by the thought.

People have been growing herbs since ancient times, prizing them for their powerful healing properties, and many culinary, medicinal, aromatic and ornamental applications. Today, modern nutrition science is validating their many beneficial properties, and discerning chefs are adding specialty herbs and edible flowers to their signature dishes. We know that herbs are full of crucial phytochemicals that support good health and provide protection against many diseases. And because herbs are a low-calorie food, they are, calorie for calorie, some of the most nutrient-dense superfoods available.

Herbs are a wise addition to anyone's diet rotation. It's fun and easy to add herbs to your diet by generously "herbing" common dishes such as frittatas and omelets, rice, sauces, and beverages.

Now, let's take a closer look at the 10 best, and easiest, herbs to grow at home.

Basil

Basil is a fragrant annual bushy herb that is very easy to grow in a sunny spot in your garden or in a large pot. It likes well-drained, moist, loamy soil, but will grow in less ideal conditions if watered regularly and fertilized with compost about once a month. It loves heat and full sun, and will grow fast once the temperatures reach 80-90 degrees.

There are many different varieties of basil — more than 150! — such as sweet basil, Thai basil, holy basil, lemon basil, cinnamon basil and purple basil to name but a few. If your pot is large enough, you can plant a few varieties together and enjoy a selection of flavors at your fingertips.

Rebecca's article continues [HERE](#).

MATERIA MEDICA - FENNEL



Photo: Botanical.com

Botanical Name: *Foeniculum vulgare*

Common Name: Fennel

Family: Umbelliferae

Ayurvedic/TCM Name: Saunph/Xiao Hui Xiang

Parts Used: Seeds, Leaves, Roots

Native Region: Indigenous to shores of Mediterranean, spreading east to India

Geographic Distribution: It followed civilization, especially where Italians

colonized, and may be found growing in many parts of the world upon dry soils near sea-coast and upon river banks. [1]

Botanical Description: Has a thick, perennial root-stock, stout stems, 4-5 feet or more in height, erect and cylindrical, bright green and cylindrical or copper-bronze leaves. Leaves very finely dissected into very finest of segment, the petioles are broad, clasping. The bright golden flowers, produced in large, flat terminal umbels with 13-20 rays, are in bloom in July to September. Seeds 6 mm long, oblong or ellipsoid, greenish yellow and 5-ribbed, anise flavored. [1]

Cultivation: Prefers well-drained, poor to medium rich soil and full sun. Can be grown from seeds, planted after danger of frost has passed. Seeds usually germinate within 14 days. Once your plants grow to seed, you will never need to replant.[1]

Harvesting Guidelines: Harvest once seeds begin to dry. Strip off umbels and store in cool, dry place.

Constituents: Volatile oils: Anethole (chief constituent of Anise oil) and Fenchone. Fenchone is a colorless liquid possessing a pungent, camphoraceous odor and taste, and when present gives the disagreeable bitter taste to many of the commercial products. Fenchone contributes to the medicinal properties of the oil. [2]

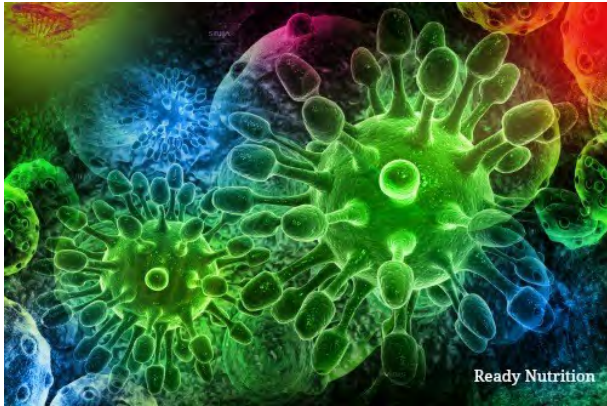
Uses: Reminiscent of anise and licorice, fennel is one of those versatile herbs unfamiliar to many Americans, but found to be delightful upon experimentation. One reason for its versatility is that every part can be used: the bulb root, the tender, wispy leaves, and the seeds.

Fennel adds a sweetly musky flavor in combination with vegetables such as beets, carrots and sweet potatoes, with savory roast meats and fish, pasta dishes, and even raw in salads. Used for centuries in Asian medicine, even the essential oil made from fennel is used for upset stomach relief. Clinical trials have found fennel to have skin-softening and anti-aging properties, and extracts have been found to ease colic in infants. Vitamin C is by far its most important nutritional attribute, but other minerals and phytonutrients combine to help prevent cholesterol build-up, high blood pressure, and colon cancer. [3]

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The Rise of Superbugs and ‘Nightmare Bacteria’ and How You Can Stay Healthy

Sara Tipton, [Ready Nutrition](#)



“Nightmare bacteria” with unusual resistance to antibiotics of last resort were found more than 200 times in the United States last year in a first-of-its-kind hunt to see how much of a threat these rare cases have become. It’s also important to realize that there are steps that can be taken to help stem the evolution of these superbugs and remain healthy.

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see how much of a threat these rare cases have become. It’s also important to realize that there are steps that can be taken to help stem the evolution of these superbugs and remain healthy.

The pipes of hospitals carrying away the infections of the sick are bound to be quite disturbing places, however, scientists dared to snoop around in them anyway and found that they can fuel superbugs: [antibiotic-resistant bacteria](#). The Centers for Disease Control even announced that they found 200 types of antibiotic-resistant bacteria lurking around – and hospitals seem to be the perfect breeding grounds.

The genetic building blocks for antibiotic resistance intermingle freely in the pipes connected to the hospital rooms of those who are sick with viruses and bacterial infections, according to a [study published in the journal *mBio*](#). That DNA can give superbugs the power to defeat modern medicines and threaten the lives of other patients.

In a new study, [published by *The American Society for Microbiology*](#), scientists determined that antibiotic-resistant bacteria are bred in the plumbing of hospitals. The study, titled [Genomic Analysis of Hospital Plumbing Reveals Diverse Reservoir of Bacterial Plasmids Conferring Carbapenem Resistance](#) found that even when hospitals themselves are impeccably clean of infectious bacteria and viruses, the pipes that carry away those micro-organisms are not.

In the first nine months of the year, more than 5,770 samples were tested for these “nightmare bacteria,” as the CDC so lovingly calls them, and [about 25% were found to have genes that make them hard to treat and easy to share their resistance](#) with other types of bacteria. Of these, 221 had unusual genes that conferred resistance. The cases were scattered throughout 27 states.

“Essentially, we found nightmare bacteria in your backyard,” said the CDC’s Anne Schuchat. “These verge on untreatable infections,” she added, where the only option may be supportive care such as intravenous fluids and machines to maintain life to give the patient a chance to recover. [MORE](#)

Millet / Butternut Squash with Kale & Chard



For a satisfying gluten-free meal, enjoy this dinner without meat or sauté some chicken in avocado oil and coco-amines.

Ingredients

Millet

- 1 cup Millet - toasted in a dry skillet
- 1 tsp chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 cups hot water
- 1 tsp iodized sea salt
- 1 tsp summer savory

Veggies

- 4 cups torn and de-stemmed kale/Swiss chard mix
- 1 peeled butternut squash cut into 1" slices and de-seeded
- 1 can unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 tsp fenugreek
- 1 Tbs cinnamon
- 1 tsp iodized sea salt

Directions

Set Sun Oven out to preheat.

After toasting millet, add 1 tsp chicken or vegetable stock in 2 cups hot water. Season and place in Sun Oven.

In second pan, top torn greens with sliced butternut squash. Cover with coconut milk and season.

Stack pots in Sun Oven and bake for ~2 hours. Stir millet midway. Test squash with fork for doneness.

Serve veggies over millet and spoon coconut cream over all.

Makes 4-6 servings.

Tips to Save Money While Eating Real Food

Julie Gropp of [Our Provident Homestead](#) shared some tips about eating real foods. How about you? Isn't it about time you started eating real food?

Real food is the basis of our homestead, but that doesn't make it easy or cheap. So today, I wanted to give you some tips to save money while eating real food at home.



1. **Don't waste food**-Buy what your family will eat and eat what you buy.
2. **Shop the sales**-Take a look at the weekly sales circular from the store you are going to shop at and see what meals you can plan around what is on sale.
3. **Batch cooking**-Cook several meals with similar ingredients. That way you can take advantage of bulk pricing.
4. **Use healthy fillers**-beans, oats, rice can be used to fill tummies because they are cheap and easily available.
5. **Barter**-do you have something in your garden that you can trade for eggs or meat from a neighbor?
6. **Garden & Livestock**-eat lots of eggs (if you have laying hens), veggies from the garden, consider meat chickens to eat more real food on the homestead.
7. **Eat less meat**-Meat is usually the biggest part of our food budget (especially the good kind) so try to fit several vegetarian meals into your weekly plan to save money.
8. **Keep track of prices and compare**-Keep a notebook of how much things cost so that if you come across a sale you will know if it is a good deal or not.
9. **Meal Planning**-Come up with a list of your weekly meals ahead of time. This helps you use what you already have in the fridge and make a grocery list so you don't overspend at the store. [Here](#) is the meal planning system I use for our family.
10. **Buy a whole chicken** instead of chicken breasts. Eat the meat and then use the bones for chicken broth.

By following these tips and eliminating junk food from your weekly budget, you should be able to increase the amount of real food in your diet.

And believe me, switching to a real food diet is so worth it! So don't give up!