

By Inga Hansen

## Green Your Garden Grows

Spa owners are expanding their commitment to holistic and eco-sustainable care by growing organic ingredients.

GROWING YOUR OWN INGREDIENTS IS USUALLY reserved for land-rich resort spas. But even a tiny day spa can add homegrown touches to its menu. Whether it's a window herb garden or a small, organic garden, using ingredients grown in your backyard is an ideal fit for green businesses. Even better, you don't need a green thumb. "Incorporating spa-grown ingredients is within everyone's reach," says Lisa Rogers Sykes, an eco-friendly specialist with Universal Companies (universalcompanies.com). "You don't need a lot of space, time or skill."

### Food for Thought

Spa-grown ingredients can be incorporated in your product formulations and cuisine. Let's take a look at what some spas are doing.

When The Spa at Rancho Bernardo Inn (ranchobernardoinn.com) in San Diego opened in 2007, manager Bree Lewis-Pritchard and director Michelle Schlekewy looked to the Inn's own garden as they planned the menu. Rosemary, lavender and other ingredients are used in the spa's Made Fresh Daily treatments—scrubs, wraps and pedicures mixed by employees just before guests arrive.

"In the spring, we offered a treatment made with rosemary grown in our garden and avocado from a local organic farm," Lewis-Pritchard says.

Guests of The Spa at Rancho Bernardo Inn leave with spa-to-go recipe cards. They include core ingredients used in services to create food and skincare goodies that clients can whip up at home. "People love that we teach them about the benefits of ingredients found in their own gardens and kitchens," Lewis-Pritchard says.

### Harvesting Your Own

Whether the ingredients you wish to grow will be used to make soups and salads in your café or in body wraps and scrubs in your treatment rooms, start small. A simple herb garden can provide a variety of spa-worthy ingredients, such as mint, thyme and rosemary. And aloe vera plants are filled with succulent juice that soothes, hydrates and promotes healing of the skin.

For the more adventurous, Sykes recommends a 4-by-8-foot raised organic garden, where produce and herbs can be planted with minimal space. "I grow lettuce in the



At the Spa at Rancho Bernardo Inn, guests receive treatments made with fresh organic ingredients. They take place in outdoor treatment rooms called casitas.



When planting an organic garden on spa premises, the best bet is to start small with a raised bed, such as this one.

spring, tomatoes or eggplants in summer, and crops of broccoli or cabbage in the fall,” Sykes says.

Growing seasons are dictated by climate, so indigenous plants are an ideal starting point for planning a garden. “In Florida, citrus is a good choice. In Maine, blueberries do well. Tomatoes grow just about anywhere,” Sykes says. If you’re not sure what’s indigenous in your region, neighborhood nurseries and farmers’ markets provide

## Choosing Your Crop

Trying to decide which ingredients may be a good fit for your region and clientele? Check out this list of common fruits, vegetables and herbs touted for treating the skin.

- Juice from the **aloe vera** plant is hydrating and healing. As such, it’s often used in formulations to treat burns and soothe irritated skin.
- Antioxidant-rich **blueberries** help protect skin from free-radical damage.
- In addition to being a tasty addition to salads and soups, **cucumber** is used to calm skin and reduce puffiness, especially around eyes.
- **Lavender, lemongrass** and **lime** are known for their naturally antiseptic, bacteria-fighting properties. The scent of lavender relaxes clients; lemongrass eases sore muscles; lime brightens the complexion; and lemongrass and lime cut down on oil production.
- **Mint** emits a refreshing fragrance and is an anti-inflammatory agent.
- A natural antioxidant, **rosemary** helps ward off free radicals. Taken internally, it’s credited for soothing upset stomachs and digestive disorders.
- **Thyme** is a natural astringent used in skincare formulations designed to treat acne, as well as bruising and cuts.
- **Tomato** acts as an exfoliant. Rich in vitamin C, its acids unclog pores and do away with dead cells.

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