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20 Herbal Gifts for Christmas – Flower basket, kitchen plait, mulled wine basket, Christmas pot-pourri, flower coasters, fragrant jewellery, needlework pincushion, miniature herb garden, selection box, cosmetic basket, seed selection, aromatic teacosy, wallet of colours, Christmas herb candles, spicy lavender sacks, decorated box, notepaper and ink, bath sachets, Christmas hamper.

Herbs At Christmas –

Decorations to make, Christmas swag, pomanders, table and tree decorations.

Perfumes and Flavours – essential oils.

Christmas Recipes – Main dishes for the buffet, side dishes, savoury and sweet biscuits, desserts. Mulled wine, punch.

Preserves – syrups, jellies, mincemeat, herb peppers. Home made confections.

Flowercrafts

The traditional meanings of the flowers and herbs help to make posies for special occasions really personal. A message can be brought together in the posy itself for a sick friend, new baby or new home.

Extract from page 93

Making a tussie mussie

Generally, at the centre we place a pink, a rose or cluster of herb flowers, such as yarrow, lavender or helichrysum . With the central herb decided, it is helpful to walk around the herb garden trying other herb foliage and flowers against this until you have decided on five or six herbs. It is effective to alternate flowers and foliage, with a large leafed herb such as sage, lady's mantle or lemon geranium as the outer layer.

Strip the lower leaves from all stems and place the first circle of foliage around the central stem. Tie in place with crochet cotton or use florists wire to hold this circle in place. Add the next circle of flowers and tie again. Repeat until the posy is completed. Enclose with foil or tissue and tie with a ribbon.

For a sick friend

Red rose is a good centre flower for love, with the added benefit of a soothing perfume. Lemon balm for sympathy (variegated is pretty) and chamomile to give patience and renewed energy, can be followed by heartsease or pansies for loving thoughts. Coriander makes the optimistic suggestion that things will prove better than they seem and lady's mantle, if your friend is female, adds a protective blessing.

To Welcome Friends to a New Home

A central cluster of yarrow for seven year's good luck is a lovely beginning. Rosemary for happy memories and new friendships is followed by betony for happy surprises and sage offers the hope of every comfort. Basil gives welcoming, loving wishes, fennel adds a special, flattering greeting.

Christmas section

Christmas decorations

Among the decorations are many fragrant ideas, including filling cubes of Christmas fabric with spiced lavender to hang on the tree. Made in minutes, they will soon become a regular part of your Christmas decorations. Extract page 202.

You will need:

- one quarter metre or yard of Christmas fabric with a squared pattern
- 1metre or yard of thick gold thread or narrow Christmas trim
- herb filling:-lavender with a quarter teaspoon of ground clove and one drop of essential oil of mandarin or frankincense. Needle and thread, pinking shears.

For each cube, you will need to cut an elongated cross shape which is 4 squares long and 3 squares across on your patterned material. Before you cut, however, add on a seam allowance of 0.5-1.25cm a quarter to half an inch to the outside edges of the cross shape. To make up, bring the side arms of the cross to meet the top square, right sides together as in the diagram. Stitch, following the straight line of the outside of the square on the pattern. This will give you an open box. Turn this right side out and fill with the lavender mixture, packing it down tightly to maintain the shape.

With the cube almost filled, sew the two ends of a 7.5cm (3in) length of trim or strong gold thread into one corner of the cube. Turn the seam allowance inside as you work and stitch the cube closed, adding a little lavender when you reach the last open side to make the shape symmetrical. When finished, the cubes can be hung from the branches of a Christmas tree, inside wreaths, from swags, or amongst other decorations.