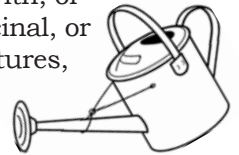


Herbs

Herbs for Growing and Enjoying

How would you define "herb"?

Herbs can mean many things to different people: they are plants that can be used for taste, fragrance, or physic; something to season food with, something to explore the world for, something to heal with, or something good to smell. An herb is a plant or plant part valued and used for its savory, medicinal, or aromatic qualities. Herbs are useful plants with a significant history and roots in diverse cultures, that are easy to grow and have many uses.



Herbs have many uses!

Herbs can be used as medicines, tonics, nutrients, oils, essences, salves, amulets, love potions, charms, bouquets, sachets, potpourri, incenses, soaps, shampoos, bath oils, facial and body splashes, pest repellents, dyes, seasoning, vinegar, salts, butters, bouquet garnishes, wines, teas, ground covers, hedges, borders, rock gardens, and container plants.



Herbs are for growing!

Most herbs are fairly easy to please; most grow well in the wild and some may even be classified as wildflowers or weeds. Most demand little more than a sunny situation and well-drained soil. Most garden pests are not attracted to herbs. Herbs, therefore, are plants especially suited to home gardens and container planting.

Fresh Culinary Herbs

Culinary herbs are aromatic plants, which have parts that possess pleasing odors and tastes. Since ancient times, parts of plants-leaves, fruits, buds, fragrant seeds, barks, and roots-have been used in cooking to season, enrich, or otherwise enhance the flavor and odor of foods to make them more pleasing to the taste.

In addition to furnishing a variety of flavors for use in meal preparation, the ornamental appearance of culinary herbs may be used to good advantage in adding beauty and fragrance to the home surroundings. Fresh herbs, home grown or purchased, may be kept up to one week in the refrigerator. Gently wash herbs in cool water, shake off excess water, and place in airtight bags or containers and refrigerate.

Surplus fresh herbs may be preserved for later use by:

Freezing: Strip away heavy stems. Wash herbs carefully. Drain and dry on absorbent paper towels. Freeze whole springs in freezer bags, or snip and pack in containers or bag for easy removal of desired amounts.

Drying: Gently wash herbs and dry on absorbent paper towels. Dry herbs slowly and thoroughly in the sun, oven, or in a microwave oven. Package dried herbs in clean dry small bottles and store in a cool dark place.

Drying in the microwave: Gently wash and thoroughly dry bunches of fresh herbs. Strip leaves from stems. Discard stems and tear large leaves into 1/2 to 3/4 inch pieces. Loosely pack enough leaves to make 1/2 cup. Place a paper towel on a plate and sprinkle herbs evenly over. Place 1/2 cup cold water in a large microwaveable cup next to the plate in the oven. Microwave at 100% power (high) for 3 to 4 minutes or just until leaves begin to feel dry and papery. Toss leaves with fingers after first minute, then every 45 seconds until leaves are just dry. Avoid overdrying. Remove herbs and sprinkle evenly onto another paper towel. Cool thoroughly and store in airtight containers in a cool, dark place. Slightly crush dried herbs before measuring to use in recipes.



Seeded Vinegar

Herb seeds can also be used to flavor vinegar. Seeds should be first bruised in a mortar and pestle to release its full flavor. Use 1 tablespoon of seeds (mustard, celery or caraway) for each pint of vinegar. Place the bruised seeds in cheesecloth and tie with a string. Suspend the tied seeds in a clean jar and cover with hot vinegar. Allow the vinegar to stand for 10 days in refrigerator. Move the cheesecloth bag up and down several times each day. Discard the seeds and decant the vinegar. Cover tightly, date the jar, and keep stored in the refrigerator. Use within 8 to 10 months.

Herb Chart Island Style

HERB	LIFE CYCLE, HEIGHT OF PLANT	HOW TO GROW	HINTS ON CULTURE	USE
Basil - various types	* perennial	seed	Pinch growth to encourage new growth. Avoid flowering.	Versatile raw or cooked; add leaves to food whole, crushed, chopped, or minced; sprigs make attractive and aromatic garnishes; traditionally used in Thai and Mediterranean dishes.
Chili Pepper	* perennial 2-3 feet	seed	Protect fruits from birds. Remove all fruits that have fallen on the ground.	Different varieties are traditionally used fresh and dried by many cultures to achieve <i>spicy hot</i> flavors; commonly used in uncooked sauces (salsas), main dishes, dips, stir-fry dishes, and as condiments and garnishes.
Chives Garlic Chives Green Onions	* perennial 1-2 feet	seed/ division	For chives, cut back plants frequently. For green onions, replant every 60 days; retain only 1/4 inch of existing roots and divide plants individually when planting.	Finely chop and add to salads, omelets, potatoes, dips, spreads, dressings, sauces, and sandwiches; saute with vegetables & meats.
Cilantro (Chinese or Mexican parsley; fresh coriander)	short lived annual 1 foot	seed	Soak seeds before planting.	Add to food whole, chopped, or minced; traditionally used in Mexican and Eastern main dishes, sauces, condiments, and as a garnish; seeds commonly used as a flavoring for pickling.
Dill	annual 3 feet	seed	May need to support plants by scaffolding.	Leaves used in salads, sauces, dressings, dips, soups and stews; seeds used in coleslaw, cakes, and breads.
Fennel	annual 3-5 feet	seeds tend to reseed itself	Light, well drained soil. Stake plant in windy location.	Distinctive licorice flavor; leaves, stalks and bulbs used in soups, stews, pastas, salads, and marinades; seeds used in breads, cookies, cakes, sauerkraut, and salad dressings.
Ginger Root	annual 2-3 feet	rhizome	Hill plants regularly. Mulch lightly as rhizomes surface above soil level.	Used fresh grated or sliced in sauces, condiments, stir-fry dishes, and curry dishes; powdered dried form used to flavor sweets including, pies, cakes, breads, ice cream, and beverages.
Horseradish Root	* perennial 2 feet	root division	Confine plant growth.	Peeled then grated or ground; commonly used as a condiment or sauce and in relishes and dressings; traditional ingredient in cocktail sauces for seafood.
Kaffir Lime	* perennial 4-6 feet	seed or grafted plants	Well drained soil. Fertilize plants 2-3 times a year.	Leaves and rind of wrinkled fruit used in Southeast Asian cooking to flavor soups and stir-fry dishes.

* Perennial: having a life cycle lasting more than two years

Herb Chart Island Style

HERB	LIFE CYCLE, HEIGHT OF PLANT	HOW TO GROW	HINTS ON CULTURE	USE
Lemon grass	* perennial 2-3 feet	clump division	Avoid late evening watering.	Upper stems and outer leaves used to flavor soups or cooked with fish or chicken; finely slivered inner stalks used in stir-fry dishes and steamed dishes.
Lipstick plant	* perennial 8-15 feet	seeds cuttings	A relatively low maintenance plant. Prune plant to maintain growth.	Seeds traditionally used in Filipino and Puerto Rican dishes to achieve a reddish color.
Mint	* perennial less than 1 foot	seed/ division	Well drained soil. Re-plant every 3-4 years. Confine growth.	Used fresh or dried as a garnish, in sauces and jellies, and in beverages.
Oregano	* perennial 1-3 feet	seed/ cuttings	Grow in full sun.	Essential flavoring in spaghetti and pizza sauces; also goes well in bean and lentil soups, stuffing, chili, meat loaf and vegetables. Used traditionally in Italian, Spanish, and Mexican cooking.
Parsley	behaves like a *perennial 1 foot	seed	Soak seed prior to planting. Keep soil moist.	Most commonly used as a garnish. Used fresh or dried in soups, dips, breads, and stuffings.
Rosemary	* perennial 2-4 feet	cuttings	Well drained soil.	Used in soup stocks, stuffings, dressings, breads, and in meat casseroles.
Sage	* perennial 1-4 feet	seeds cuttings	Full sun. Exceptional drainage a must. Drought tolerant once established.	Fresh and dried leaves used to flavor stuffing, sausage, cheese, egg dishes, cooked vegetables, and fish.
Shiso	annual 1-4 feet	seeds	Grow in full sun. Well drained soil.	Red and green varieties used fresh as garnishes, condiments, and as <i>wrappers</i> for rice, fish, and vegetables; used as a flavoring and for color in oriental pickling.
Sweet Marjoram	* perennial 1-2 feet	seed/ preferably by cuttings	Well drained soil. Rather slow growing. Plant in rich soil.	Fresh or dried leaves are widely used as a flavoring in soups, stuffings, roasts, stews and salad dressings.
Tamarind	* perennial 20-30 feet tall	grafted plants	Grow in full sun. Well drained soil. Tolerant to drought conditions.	Eaten both at the green/immature state, or when the shell pod becomes brittle and the interior pulp turns brown; traditionally used as a seasoning for meats and chutneys.

* Perennial: having a life cycle lasting more than two years

Culture

Herbs prefer well-drained soil. Add some organic matter to the soil and cultivate 6-8 inches deep. Herb plants also do well in containers. Individual plant requirements are important when caring for herbs. Excess fertilizers and frequent irrigation may cause lush growth but may sacrifice the quality of the herb by lowering its volatile oils. Pests may occasionally cause some problems but very few pesticides are registered for herbs. Contact an agricultural professional for assistance before using any pesticide.

Harvesting

Fresh herbs are harvested before mid-morning. Many herbs are at their prime just before their flowers bloom. Succulent herbs such as basil should be harvested with a clean, sharp shear to minimize any entry of pathogens through cut surfaces. Unless the herbs are to be dried, avoid exposing herbs to excess light, which can lower quality by changing its color and flavors.

Make Your Own Herb Vinegar

Fresh or dried herbs can be used to flavor vinegar. Fresh herbs contain more oils than dried herbs and make better flavored vinegar. Use 1 cup of fresh herb to flavor 1 quart of vinegar. The kind of vinegar (cider, distilled white, rice, red or white wine) used is dependent on your own taste. If you are using dried herbs, use 1/2 cup to flavor 1 quart of vinegar.

Harvest herb branches before they flower, or use only the leaves and tips. Wash and dry well. Loosely fill clean bottles with the prepared herb. The amount of herbs used depends on your own taste preference. Keep in mind that some herbs are stronger in flavor than others.



Basil, rosemary, oregano, sage, tarragon, and thyme are strong flavored and generally do not mix well with each other.

Cover the herb with heated vinegar, seal bottle tightly, label, and date. Store in refrigerator for two to four weeks. Check occasionally to see that the herbs are covered with vinegar. The flavor will intensify the longer the leaves are kept in the vinegar. If a milder flavor is desired, strain the herbs out or dilute with additional vinegar. Herbs from the vinegar can be used in salads and cooking.

Herb Vinegar Combinations

- Basil: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar
- Dill Weed: Two sprigs per pint of vinegar
- Lemongrass: One 10 inch stalk per pint of vinegar
- Marjoram: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar
- Mint: Two sprigs per pint of vinegar
- Oregano: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar
- Parsley: Two sprigs per pint of vinegar
- Rosemary: Two-four inch sprigs per pint of vinegar
- Sage: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar
- Shiso (perilla) leaves (red or green): Three-four leaves per pint of vinegar
- Tarragon: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar
- Thyme: 1/3 to 1/2 cup leaves per pint of vinegar

Make Your Own Herb Blends

Store blends in airtight containers away from strong sunlight and heat. Mix blends in amounts that can be used within six months to one year.

POULTRY SEASONING

3 T. sage	2 T. marjoram
1 T. lemon thyme	2 T. parsley

SOUPS & STEWS

1 T. savory	1 1/2 t. rosemary
1 T. marjoram	1 1/2 T. parsley

TOMATO SAUCE

2 T. basil	1 1/2 t. oregano
1 T. marjoram	1 1/2 T. parsley

SALAD HERBS

1 T. basil	1 T. tarragon
1 T. parsley	1 1/2 t. thyme

FISH HERBS

1 T. basil	2 t. dill
1 T. parsley	1 whole bay leaf

TASTY HERB BLEND

2 c. coarse rock salt	1 T. dry mustard
1 large bulb garlic, peeled and crushed	3 T. chili powder
2 T. ground white pepper	1 T. celery seed
1 T. ground ginger	1 T. onion powder
2 T. poultry seasoning	2 T. dried dill weed
3 T. paprika	1 T. fresh basil or oregano

Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Mix well. Use with ground beef, chicken, turkey, or broiled chicken, and baked potatoes. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

T = Tablespoon; t = teaspoon