



## Using Fresh Culinary Herbs

Jayme Grzebik

O'ahu Urban Horticulturist and Master Gardener Coordinator  
CTAHR Urban Garden Center at Pearl City

Culinary chefs and cooks use fresh herbs to create vibrant flavors. Italian parsley, basil, thyme, rosemary, lemongrass, and Chinese parsley are just some of the herbs that you'll find on the top of a chef's shopping list. Their expertise teaches them that the fresher the ingredients, the fresher the taste.

Dried herbs are widely available in local stores, but they don't provide the same purity of flavor as fresh herbs. They can also go stale quickly.

Our garden centers provide herbs in 4-inch pots that can easily be transplanted into any full-sun garden bed or container. They range from \$2–4, which will be a significantly better investment than purchasing fresh packaged herbs at the store. A good starter-garden collection would include rosemary, basil, Italian parsley, and thyme. However, you are only limited by the herbs your local garden center has on supply. So, have fun choosing.

Recipes that call for 1 teaspoon of a dried herb will require 3 teaspoons of fresh herb. In other words, you will use more of the fresh herbs than dried herbs. The oils in dried herbs are more concentrated, in contrast to fresh herbs, where the oils are dispersed by the high water content. The water content in fresh herbs is important in delivering the fresh flavor that only fresh herbs can offer.

Harvesting regularly will ensure that you increase the amount of fresh, succulent leaves that the plant produces

every time you prune or cut. Home gardeners find that culinary herbs grow so quickly that they are harvesting for their neighbors in no time. It is always a good practice to regularly trim flowers from the fresh herbs growing in your garden. Allowing herbs to flower will decrease the intensity of the oils in their leaves.

Chef Dale Thomas, Kapi'olani Community College Culinary Arts Instructor and veteran Hale Koa chef, has visited the CTAHR Urban Garden Center in Pearl City to demonstrate how to use fresh culinary herbs. "Chefs are thinking about cooking healthy, and using fresh herbs is so important when cooking healthy," says Chef Dale. The O'ahu Master Gardeners are celebrating the first phase of the UGC's Herb Garden. Since June 2008, dedicated volunteers have amended the soil with organic amendments, propagated fresh herbs, and laid a new brick walkway for easy access to the herbs. Visit the new UGC Culinary Herb Garden and discover cooking with fresh herbs.

\*CTAHR Popular Press articles were written to appear as newspaper columns and therefore are of necessity brief and sometimes simplified treatments of their subjects. For more detailed information resources, visit [www.ctahr.hawaii.edu](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu).

### Do you have a gardening question?

Contact a CTAHR Cooperative Extension Service or Master Gardener program resource.

**East Hawai'i:** (9 a.m.–noon, Tu, Th) 981-5199, [himga@hawaii.edu](mailto:himga@hawaii.edu)

**Kaua'i:** (1–4:30 p.m., M–F) 274-3475, [rebesu@hawaii.edu](mailto:rebesu@hawaii.edu)

**Maui:** (9 a.m.–noon, M, Tu, Th) 244-3242 ext. 228, [MauiMG@ctahr.hawaii.edu](mailto:MauiMG@ctahr.hawaii.edu)

**Moloka'i:** (9 a.m.–noon, M–F) 567-6935, [arcer@ctahr.hawaii.edu](mailto:arcer@ctahr.hawaii.edu)

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