

Herbs

Most herbs are not difficult to grow. Any light, well-drained soil will work well. In fact, many herbs seem to grow best in poor, dry soils, and will do poorly in rich soils or with too much moisture.

Soil preparation for an herb garden is not too different from that for a vegetable garden. The addition of 5 - 10 lbs. of dolomite lime per 100 sq. ft. will help raise the normally acid pH we have in our area. Moderate amounts of a general garden fertilizer, such as a 5-10-10, in sandy soils should satisfy the modest mineral needs of most herbs. Two to three lbs. per 100 sq. ft. should be about right. Fine textured soils, which have better fertility, may not need any pre-plant fertilizer application, although it pays to watch the new plants for "hunger signs." Most herbs will not do well in poorly drained, clay soils unless a lot of work is done to improve drainage and tilth.

As with a vegetable garden, herbs generally need a minimum of six hours of sun per day. There are, however, some herbs, such as parsley and all the mints, that seem to be able to adapt to part shade. Once established and mulched with bark or sawdust, most perennial herbs will rarely need watering.

If you don't want to buy transplants of herbs, they can be started indoors in pots in a south-facing window or under fluorescent lights. Follow the same steps as if you were starting tomatoes or peppers indoors. Many herbs can also be seeded directly into the garden; simply follow the directions on the seed pack.

Herbs don't have to be grown in a garden all by themselves. They can be incorporated into landscaping just like other annuals, perennials, or shrubs. In the vegetable garden, they make good companions, because their distinctive tastes and smells may confuse garden insects. Herbs are also very well adapted to growing in containers. Quite a variety can be grown in one window box or a whiskey half-barrel. Containers can also be moved indoors in the fall to extend the growing season.

Here are a few notes about the most popular herbs:

BASIL is an annual with broad, shiny, aromatic leaves. Basil likes a warm, sunny location and rich garden soil. After the danger of frost has passed, seedlings started indoors should be transplanted, or direct garden sowing may begin. Thin seedlings to about 15 inches apart. Keep spikes of white flowers pinched out. Harvest individual leaves or shoots as needed. Hang plant bunches in a dark, cool place to dry for winter use, or make pesto sauce and freeze.

PARSLEY, a biennial often grown as an annual, has curly, dark green leaves. Parsley likes partial shade or full sun and well-drained soil. Set plants out in April or sow directly in the garden. Parsley seed should be soaked in warm water before planting and may take several weeks to sprout. Thin seedlings to 6 - 8 inches apart. Harvest older leaves as needed. Parsley is semi-hardy and can usually be grown in protected areas during the winter.

MINT is a perennial herb with square stems and aromatic leaves. Most mints like partially shady areas and moist soil, but they will grow almost anywhere. Propagate mints from stem cuttings and contain in peppermint, spearmint, pennyroyal, apple mint, and bergamot mint. Pinch stems and leaves and use as needed.

CHIVES, a perennial, have small onion-like leaves and tiny bulbs. Chives enjoy sunny or lightly shaded areas and moist, fairly rich, organically rich soil. Most chives are propagated from bulb divisions, but they can also be grown from seed. Chives are hardy and will be available for cutting most of the year. Because chives have many purple flowers, they can be planted as ornamentals.

DILL is an annual that gets tall and bushy with feathery leaves and wide clusters of yellow flowers, both having a strong fragrance. Dill enjoys full sun and well-drained soil. It can be sown several times during spring, starting as soon as the ground warms up. Thin seedlings to 12 - 18 inches apart. Harvest leaves as needed and before flower buds appear. Harvest seedheads after the seeds have turned brown. To dry seedheads, hang in bunches in a dark, dry place with paper spread beneath to catch the seeds (or in paper bags).

SAGE is a semi-shrubby and hardy perennial with small gray-green, aromatic leaves. Sage likes sunny areas with dry, well-drained soil. Transplant seedlings 14 - 18 inches apart. Sage can be trimmed back in spring for bushier, fuller growth. Pick leaves as needed.

CORIANDER/CILANTRO/CHINESE PARSLEY is an annual with fernlike aromatic foliage and flat clusters of pinkish-white flowers. Coriander likes sunny, well-drained soil. Sow as soon as danger of frost has passed and thin to 5 – 6 inches apart. Harvest leaves as needed. Harvest seeds as soon as they turn beige, because they fall quickly after maturing. Seedheads can be cut and hung to dry like dill.

See Herb Table on the following page.

HERB TABLE

HERB	FOLIAGE					USES						CULTURE & CHARACTER							
	Light Green	Medium Green	Dark Green	Colored		Cooking	Scent	Salad	Tea	Other		Annual	Perennial	Moisture	Height	Shape	Evergreen	Shade	Many var.
Anise		X				X		X	X	X		X			2-3'	TT			
Asparagus		X						X		X			X		3-6'	TT		P	X
Bay			X			X	X		X	X			X	D		BU		P	
Basil, opal			X			X						X			12-18"	BU			
Basil, sweet		X				X		X	X			X			12-18"	BU			X
Borage			X					X				X			12-18"	TT/BU		P	
Calendula			X							X		X		D	6-12"	BU			
Caraway		X				X	X	X	X	X			Biennial		12-24"	CL			
Chamomile (Anthemis)	X						X		X				X		3-6"	SP	X	P	
Chamomile (Matricaria)	X						X		X	X		X		D	12-24"	TT		P	
Chervil		X				X		X	X	X		X			12-24"	TT		P	X
Chives			X			X		X		X			X		12"	CL			X
Coriander		X				X	X	X	X	X		X			18-24"	TT			
Dill		X				X		X	X	X		X			36-48"	TT			
Garlic			X			X		X		X			X		18-24"	CL/TT		P	X
Horehound	X								X	X			X	D	12-24"	CL			
Hyssop			X			X	X		X				X	D	18-24"	BU	X	P	
Lavender	X						X			X			X	D	12-18"	BU	X		X
Lemon Balm		X					X	X	X	X			X		18-24"	CL		P	
Marjoram, sweet	X					X							X		6-18"	BU	X		
Mint, apple	X			X		X	X		X				X		20-30"	SP		P	
Mint, Corsican	X						X						X		1/2"	SP		P	
Mint, orange			X	X		X	X		X				X		12-18"	SP		P	
Mint, peppermint			X	X		X	X		X				X		12-18"	SP		P	
Mint, pineapple	X			X		X	X		X				X		20-30"	SP		P	
Mint, spearmint			X			X	X	X	X	X			X		18-24"	SP		P	X
Nasturtium		X						X		X		X		D	6-12"	SP		P	X
Oreganum	X					X	X	X		X			X		18-24"	BU			X
Pennyroyal		X					X	X		X			X		6-8"	SP		P	
Poppy		X								X		X		D	24-36"	TT		P	X

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	Light Green	Medium Green	Dark Green	Colored		Cooking	Scent	Salad	Tea	Other		Annual	Perennial	Moisture	Height	Shape	Evergreen	Shade	Many var.
Rose, miniature			X			X	X	X	X	X	X			8-20"	BU			X	
Rosemary			X			X	X		X	X			X	D	18-30"	BU	X		
Rue	X									X			X		12-18"	BU	X		
Saffron		X				X				X			X		6-8"	CL		P	
Sage	X			X		X			X	X			X	D	12-24"	BU		P	X
Savory, summer			X			X		X				X			12-18"	TT			
Savory, winter			X			X		X	X	X			X	D	10-12"	BU			
Sedum		X						X		X			X	D	2-4"	CL	X		X
Sorrel		X						X		X			X		10-20"	CL			
Strawberry			X							X			X		4-8"	SP		P	X
Tarragon, French			X			X		X					X	D	12-24"	SP			
Thyme, common	X		X	X		X	X	X	X				X	D	12-24"	BU	X		X
Thyme, creeping			X			X	X			X			X	D	2-6"	SP		P	X
Thyme, lemon		X		X		X			X				X	D	6-12"	BU	X		
Violet		X					X	X		X			X		3-6"	SP		X	X
Wintergreen			X				X	X	X	X			X		6"	BU	X	T	
Woodruff, sweet		X					X	X	X	X			X	D	4-6"	SP	X	X	
Wormwood	X					X				X			X	D	24-48"	BU	X		
Yarrow	X	X	X							X			X	D	8-36"	SP/BU			X
Yarrow, creeping			X							X			X	D	1/2"	SP	X	P	

KEY

Other - some edible portion, condiment, repellent/attractant, dried arrangements

Shade - herb will grow in (P) partial shade, (T) total shade or (X) shade only

Shape - (SP) spreading, (CL) clump, (BU) bushy or (TT) tall and thin

Moisture - (D) herb will take dry conditions once established

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