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## INTRODUCTION TO HERBS

Herbs are a garden world of excitement and sensory delight. They are among Nature's oldest garden gifts. Many of these easy to grow plants have been cultivated for centuries by gardeners who have found in them fragrance, culinary enjoyment, medicinal properties, unique landscape subjects and companion plants.

### GETTING STARTED

Choosing which herbs to grow is the fun part! You can plant a formal herb garden, such as the popular knot garden or an informal cottage type herb garden. You may choose a theme garden, such as a tea or biblical herb garden (some examples are listed on the back). Herbs combine well with perennials or can be integrated into the vegetable garden. Have fun playing with the different colors, textures and scents. Be sure to consider the conditions needed by the plants you choose, such as sun or shade requirements and whether they need moist or dry soil.

### SOIL PREPARATION

While many herbs tolerate poor soil, improving the texture and drainage of the soil will make them happier. Deeply spade or till the area to loosen compacted soil. Enrich the soil with plenty of peat moss, compost, or aged manure. This will help improve the texture of heavy clay soils. Coarse sand or gypsum can also be worked in to improve drainage. Bone meal can be added to provide a mild but long-lasting boost of phosphorus.

### TRANSPLANTING TIPS

Avoid pulling the plant from its pot by the stem. Loosen the root ball by squeezing the plastic pot. Then turn the pot upside down and tap the edge on your open hand. It should gently tumble out. If the roots have filled the pot, loosen them by pushing your thumbs into the root ball's center and then pulling out. It is okay to tear the roots. This will help encourage new roots to grow out into the soil you have prepared. Place the plant in the hole and backfill. Firm the soil even with the soil level of the plant. Water well. A plant starter solution can be used at this time, or a balanced liquid fertilizer diluted to half strength.



## **HARVESTING**

Whether you harvest your culinary herbs a few stems at a time for immediate use or many stems for drying or freezing, there are a few important principles to keep in mind that will help improve the quality and vigor of your plants. **CUT OFTEN.** This will improve air circulation and help to create neat, more compact plants that are less woody. Always cut stems off, rather than just leaves. This will promote branching, vigorous new growth, strong roots, and will increase the plant's future productivity. Major cutting of winter hardy perennial plants (i.e. sage) should be done 40 days prior to the first expected frost in your area. This will give soft, new growth a chance to mature and prepare for winter.

## **GROWING INDOORS**

Many herbs can be potted to grow indoors. The key to success is placing them where they will receive lots of bright light. Some direct sun is best, especially in the winter. If plants become thin and elongated, they need stronger light. Temperatures of 60 - 70 degrees are preferred. Careful watering is important. Avoid overwatering. It is best to put enough water in the pot so that some runs out the drainage hole, then do not water again until the soil surface is dry. Avoid letting the pot sit in water longer than an hour or so. Morning is the best time to water so that excess moisture evaporates during the day. If the air in your home is dry, a light misting of tepid water can be helpful. Air circulation is also important. Feed plants with a balanced fertilizer every two weeks in spring and summer, and once a month in fall. It is best not to fertilize in winter.

### **HERBS FOR POTPOURRI GARDEN**

Agastache  
Artemisias  
Chamomile  
Clary Sage  
Clove pink  
Fennel  
Lavender  
Lemon Balm  
Lemon Grass  
Lemon Thyme  
Lemon Verbena  
Monarda  
Peppermint  
Roses  
Scented Basils  
Scented Geraniums  
Spearmint  
Sweet Woodruff  
Violets

### **HERBS FOR TEA GARDEN**

Agastache  
Basils  
Calendula  
Caraway  
Catnip  
Chamomile  
Dill  
Fennel  
Garden Sage  
Horehound  
Lemon Balm  
Lemon Verbena  
Lovage  
Mints  
Rosehips  
Rosemary  
Scented Geraniums  
Sweet Marjoram  
Thymes  
Yarrow

### **HERBS FOR SHAKESPEARE GARDEN**

Bay  
Calendula  
Garlic  
Lemon Balm  
Pansy  
Poppy  
Rosemary

### **HERBS FOR GROUNDCOVER**

Artemisia  
Chamomile  
Creeping Thymes  
Mints  
Pennyroyal  
Santolina  
Sweet Woodruff

### **HERBS TO REPEL INSECTS**

Basil  
Catnip  
Chives  
Garlic  
Lavender  
Mint  
Parsley  
Rosemary  
Sage  
Thyme

### **BIBLICAL HERBS**

Aloe  
Coriander  
Garlic  
Mint  
Nigella  
Rose  
Rosemary  
Rue  
Wormwood  
(Artemisia)



*Making the world beautiful  
one flower at a time.*