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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.*