

From Garden to Kitchen—Basics of Growing and Using Garden Herbs

- ❖ To prepare an herb bed, break up the soil. Average sandy soil is best, with compost worked in. Most perennial kitchen herbs mentioned here originate from hot, rocky slopes with infertile soil. Essential oil content of aromatic plants is actually higher in plants that are grown in poorer soil!
- ❖ Even a small area--2'X 3'—or a few containers, can make attractive, useful herb-cutting beds.

- ❖ The following are all plants for full sun (6 or more hours needed) that like well-drained soil, unless otherwise mentioned.
- ❖ Most are fragrant.

Anise Hyssop H: 24" W:18" Perennial

Sweet fragrant leaves. Use dried or fresh in teas. Blue flowers in late summer attract butterflies. A good centerpiece for the herb bed—plant annual herbs around it.

Arugula H: 24" W:18" Annual

Use in salads and cooking for a piquant, peppery flavor. Harvest leaves throughout summer.

Basil, Purple Ruffles H:24" W:12-18" Annual

Ornamental. Dark ruffled leaves, pink blooms. A splash of color in the herb bed—good knot garden plant. Use fresh in salads.

Basil, Spicy Globe H:12" W:12-18" Annual

Becomes a neat globe as it matures. Miniature leaves are fragrant and spicy. Clip to maintain shape and use leaves in salads, pasta, and salsa picante.

Basil, Sweet H:18" W:12-18" Annual

Use leaves: fresh for pesto, and dried for kitchen use throughout the year. Pleasant appearance and fragrance make it a yearly addition to any sunny spot.

Chamomile, Roman H:6" W:8-12" Perennial

Foliage and flowers have an apple fragrance if walked on or crushed. Good to plant along paths in an herb garden. Drought tolerant. Use flowers fresh or dried in tea or a relaxing herb bath.

Chives, Garlic H:12-24" W:10" Perennial

Blue green stems and white flowers. Harvest to use fresh throughout spring, summer and fall.

Chives H:12" W:12" Perennial

Purple flowers, mild flavor. Great used fresh on potatoes, fish, summer salads.

Cilantro/ Coriander H:30" W:12" Annual.

Cilantro leaves are very tasty--use in Asian recipes, and salsas. Use coriander seeds--ripe in late summer--in curries and refried beans.

Lemon Balm H:24" W:24" Perennial

Leafy lime green mound--delicious fragrance and flavor. Use fresh leaves and flowers in sun tea, vegetable dishes and fruit salad. Dry to use throughout the year in relaxing tea or pot pourri blends. If allowed to flower, it will sow seed, but not invasively. Tolerates moisture and part shade.

Lemon Grass H:3-6' W:12-18" Annual

Long slender arching blades. Sharp lemony fragrance. Use white base of stem in Thai recipes, and use leaves for refreshing tea or pot pourri blends. Fine container plant. Overwinter indoors.

Oregano H:20" W:18" Perennial

A standard choice to anchor an herb bed. Whitish flowers and leaves are edible. Use in herbal vinegars, Italian herb blends, garlic bread. This plant divides well. Will tolerate light shade.

Parsley, Curled and Flatleaf H:12-16" W:12-16" Annual

A fine ornamental in any bed. Harvest anytime for fish dishes, summer salads, garnish.

Peppermint H:18" W:12-18" Perennial

Easy to grow mint--will spread if not contained. Spikes of violet flowers in late summer. Grow under trees to diffuse hot sun. Use fresh in cooking, bouquets, herb baths, soaps. Whole or chopped leaves for meats, sun tea, mint juleps.

Root Beer Plant (Sweet scented marigold--*Tagetes*)H:8" W:6" Annual

Uncommon plant--leaves smell like root beer. Leaves are a substitute for tarragon--add minced leaf to fish or egg dishes. Bring indoors to overwinter.

Rosemary H:24-48" W:20-30" Annual

As a perennial in the Mediterranean, this plant grows to 4'. Overwinters very well indoors in a pot. Use fresh leaves to season chicken, salmon, breads, vegetables, marinades. Rosemary is a symbol of remembrance and love, and was traditionally used in marriage bouquets.

Sage, *Salvia* H:2-2 1/2' W:2" Perennial

Pleasant gray foliage, soft texture all summer. Use as a seasoning, fresh or dried. Has astringent and disinfectant properties--use for tea, mouthwash, hair rinse. Mulch for winter.

Sage, Pineapple H:24" W:18" Annual
Broad foliage emits a pineapple scent. Small red flowers draw hummingbirds. Yummy minced on ham or chicken, in iced tea, juleps, desserts.

Sage, Tri-Color H:24" W:24" Perennial
Gorgeous purple/white variegated foliage. Great accent plant. Uses are same as *Salvia*. Also, use fresh sprigs as a garnish or in flower arrangements. Mulch in for winter.

Savory, Winter H:12" W:10" Perennial
Smaller woody herb with needle-like leaves. Piney-thyme flavor accents beans, pork, game, soups, sausage, root vegetables. Dries and keeps easily. Tolerates drought and poor soil. Mulch in for winter.

Spearmint H:24" W:12-18" Perennial
Very aromatic flavorant—one of the best mints for cooking. Use in sun tea and fruit salads. Grows best in moist soil, part sun, where it will readily spread.

Sugarbush (*Stevia rebaudiana*) H:20" W:12" Annual
Fresh leaves are very sweet. Dried leaves are even sweeter than sucrose. Used as a diet supplement. Use stevia leaves in tea blends and baking recipes as a sugar substitute.

Tarragon, French H:18-36" W:18-24" Perennial
A sprawling shape with long narrow leaves—good anchor plant in an herb bed. An essential seasoning in French cooking. Great on broiled fish. Mulch in for winter.

Thyme H:2-5" W:12" Perennial
A low carpet of gray green leaves with small clusters of lilac colored flowers. Rich fragrance. Thyme has antiseptic and preservative properties. Add to soups, Italian herb blends. Dries and stores well. Mulch to protect in winter.

Thyme, Lemon H:9-15" W:12-18" Perennial
Variegated gold and green leaves have a lemony scent. Goes well with fish, chicken, salad dressings, drinks, sauces. Similar health benefits to Common Thyme. Protect with mulch in winter.

Mother-of-Thyme H:2-4" W:10" Perennial
Creeping plant with dark green foliage. Very tough as a groundcover, or in between stones on the garden path. Less fragrant than Common Thyme.

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