

USING HERBS

- **Flavouring drinks** - place washed sprigs of angelica, bay, bergamot, lemon balm, mint or woodruff in summer fruit and alcoholic cocktails.
- **Herb sugars** - some sweeter herbs can be preserved in sugar. Pack fresh leaves of lemon- and rose-scented geraniums, thyme, lemon verbena and lavender sprigs in white granulated sugar in airtight containers, stirring daily to prevent clumping. When the sugar stays dry and loose, remove the leaves before they crumble, and use the 'herb sugar' in iced teas or desserts.
- **Candied flowers** - for edible garnishes or cake decorations, candy rose petals, violet or cow-slip flowers by brushing a little egg white over each flower then dip it in powdered sugar. Let the sugar dry into a clear coating, and store in an airtight container.
- **Freezing** - herbs such as mints and chives can be preserved by freezing. Wash before sealing in bags, expelling any air, and place in the freezer.



DRYING

Cut herbs at their peak on a dry day and discard any poor-quality leaves. Hang stems in bunches of six to eight stems in an airy room, away from direct heat or sun. Once they are crisp, but still retain some of the original colour, store in airtight dark glass jars or tins.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Spade & fork
Watering can
Trowel
Herb seeds & plants
Pots & herb pots
Containers
Potting compost

Fertiliser
Book on herb uses
Herbs

•For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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- PlantforLife - visit www.plantforlife.info



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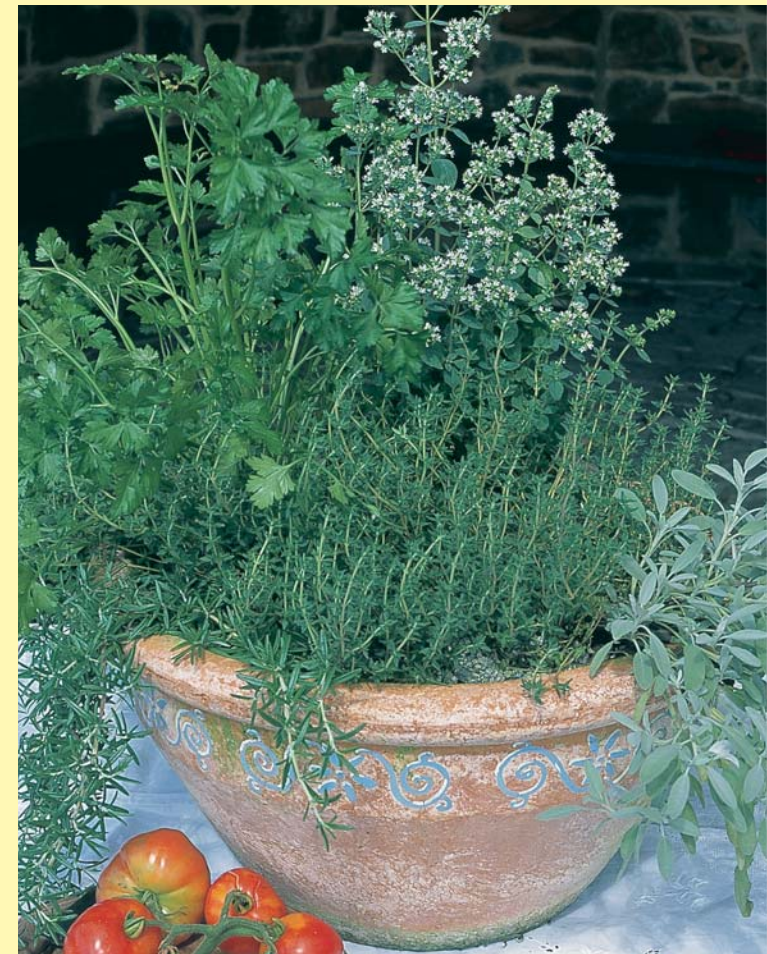


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THE EASY GUIDE TO GROWING HERBS



Herbs

HERBS

Herbs have been grown for centuries for their culinary, medicinal and ornamental properties. An essential ingredient in many dishes, herbs can be cultivated and picked fresh from the garden, however small the plot. These ornamental plants range from those grown annually from seed, such as basil; to more permanent perennials, such as mint and tarragon; and shrubs including rosemary, lavender and bay.

They have a multitude of uses - infusions from the leaves or flowers can help relieve a range of ailments; leaves, stems, seeds or flowers can be used fresh, dried or frozen to flavour sweet and savoury dishes; dried herbs can be added to pot pourri; and some work as insect repellents. From a small pot on the kitchen window sill, to outdoor containers and growbags, a patch in the veg plot, or intertwined with flowering plants, make room for herbs in the garden and enjoy their many benefits.

PLANTING

PREPARATION & PLANTING TIME: 30 MINS

- Sow annual herbs in spring straight into the container or bed in which they will be growing.
- Plant perennials, including chives and marjoram, in spring and summer; shrubby herbs such as sage and rosemary can be planted all year round. Plant vigorous growers such as mint or lemon balm in pots in beds to curtail their spread.
- They all need well prepared soil with added organic material to conserve moisture, aid drainage and supply plant foods. A gravel mulch helps prevent rotting.
- Suitable containers include grow bags, pots or troughs. Use a soil-based compost and feed pots monthly during the growing season with a high-potassium feed.
- For best results, plant in a sunny spot. This shelters plants from winter cold, and sunshine encourages the production of their aromatic oils for maximum scent and flavour and shows the ornamental foliage of some to best effect.
- Chives, mint, marjoram, parsley or tarragon grown outdoors can be potted up and overwintered on a sunny window sill or in a greenhouse or conservatory.



RECOMMENDED HERBS



CORIANDER



HERB GARDEN

ANNUAL HERBS:

- Basil: Sow in pots indoors in March/April. Move outdoors when all danger of frost is passed. A bushy plant to 45cm with curved, rounded, veined leaves and small white flowers in summer. Pick leaves about six weeks after planting for use in tomato dishes, pasta and salads.
- Chervil: Sow outdoors in pots or the ground in a dry, sunny spot. Grows to 30cm high with soft, parsley-like leaves and white umbrella-shaped flowers in summer. Pick leaves just before buds break and use raw in salads or to flavour soups or stews.
- Coriander: Sow as for chervil. Erect stem to 1m with dark green parsley-like leaves, white flowers and round seeds. Leaves and seeds feature in Asian dishes.
- Dill: Sow direct in the ground in a sunny spot. Fern-like, green leaves and lacy yellow flowers. It can reach 90cm so stake tall plants. Pick leaves just before the flowers open and sprinkle on new potatoes, fish dishes, tomatoes and green vegetables.
- Marjoram: Sow indoors or outdoors, in small pots or direct into the ground, in sun or partial shade. A small bush up to 50cm with soft, grey-green leaves and tiny white flowers. Pick leaves

- at flowering time for drying. Use as for oregano or sprinkle on pizzas and vegetable dishes.
- Parsley: slow to germinate, but can be sown indoors or outside, in pots or in the ground. Grows to 30cm tall with long stems, frilled leaves and white flowers in summer. Use fresh or dried leaves in omelettes, fish dishes, salads, vegetables or to garnish.

PERENNIAL HERBS:

- Chives: Sow indoors or outside, in small pots or directly in the ground, in sun or partial shade. Grasslike leaves reach 30cm with spherical mauve flowers in summer. Cut leaves close to the base before flowering. Use in salads, egg and dairy dishes.
- Fennel: Sow indoors or outside, in pots or the open ground, in well-drained soil in a sunny spot. Grows to 1.2m tall with feathery, divided leaves and golden flowers in autumn. Use seeds in bread or cakes or chop leaves for fish dishes or salads.
- Mint: Sow indoors or outside (where germination will be slower). Clump-growing mint has flat, pointed leaves in different shades of green, small mauve flower spikes in summer and reaches 30cm. It is fast spreading so grow in pots even

- if planting in the open ground. Sprinkle finely chopped leaves over vegetables, fish, lamb, veal and fresh fruit.
- Oregano: Sow indoors or outside in pots or open ground. Similar to marjoram but with more pungent leaves, to 40cm. Harvest leaves before the flowers form. Popular in Mediterranean cuisine especially lamb, tomato, fish or cheese dishes.
- Sage: Sow indoors, then harden off and plant in pots or directly in the ground in sun. A bushy plant to 90cm with woody stems, greeny-grey leaves and purple flowers. Pick the leaves before or at flowering time. Use to flavour stuffings for poultry, pork, fish and sausagemeat.
- Tarragon: Buy pot-grown plants and put outside in a sheltered, semi-shaded place. Overwinter indoors. A straggly plant, to 1m, with smooth, straight leaves and yellow buds in late summer. Harvest fresh young leaves and stem tips to use with chicken, beef or to flavour vinegar.
- Thyme: Sow indoors in pots and, when established, move outside into pots or the open ground. Bushy, small-leaved plants to 30cm. Golden-leaved and variegated kinds are available. Pick whole stems before or at

flowering time. Good for drying. Goes well with fish, meat, poultry, game and cheese.

SHRUBS:

- Bay: grow in pots or the open ground outdoors in a sunny, sheltered place. Repot as necessary. Slow-growing evergreen tree to 15m with dark green, glossy leaves and creamy-yellow flowers in spring and summer. Pick leaves from all over the plant for casseroles, stews and meat pasta sauces.
- Rosemary: Sow in small pots in- or outdoors or in the ground. A bush to 1.5m with narrow, dark green leaves and small mauve flowers. Use fresh or dried leaves or whole stems to flavour lamb, patés or vegetables.



BAY