



Plant Based Education & Remedies

Processing Herbs

When to Harvest:

Buds & Flowers: *Includes arnica, borage, calendula, dandelion, echinacea, mullein, roses and violets.*

Cut towards the base of the flower as they begin to bloom. Much of the medicinal potency is lost when flowers are fully open and have been pollinated.

Seeds: *Includes anise, caraway, coriander, dill and fennel.* Harvest seed pods or heads when they have changed color but before they shatter. Seeds are mainly harvested in the mid-Summer until Fall. Pods will need to lay on a screen to dry.

Leaves: *Includes basil, comfrey, lemon balm, mint, nettle, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, and thyme.*

Cut the leaves for drying just before the plant is about to bloom (the medicinal potency and flavors are highest). The leaves should clearly be fully developed. Be aware of the leaves you're harvesting, make sure there aren't any insect bites; discoloration indicates an unhealthy leaf or a leaf going through senescence (death). Cut leaves or the stems about 6 inches below the tip on a dry day (mornings and evenings preferred). Mints are best picked with the flowers in bloom and during the hottest part of the year, when their essential oils are thoroughly developed.

Roots: *Includes angelica, burdock, comfrey, dandelion, elecampane, horseradish and onion.* Harvest during the Winter or Fall to capture the medicinal potency of the plant while it's still deep within the root or bulb (during dormant stage). Dig around the base of the plant, exposing the roots, and cut only a few tender roots from each plant. Biennial plants are best harvested in the early Spring of their second year.

How to Dry Herbs:

Before drying your herbs, make sure to wash off any soil that may have been harvested with it. Shake or pat water off of herb to lessen moisture. It's important to dry your herbs in a warm (90-110°F), shaded, well ventilated area to preserve their potency. Minimal to no humidity is ideal. Protect your herbs from direct sunlight (which can wilt or over-heat your herbs). When done correctly, well-dried herbs stay vibrant in color!

Different Drying Methods:

Dehydrator: Place herbs in single layer on drying racks and stack on shelves. Turn dehydrator to 95-100°F and leave on until herbs feel dry and crisp. (This could take up to 2-3 days).

Bundling Herbs for Drying: Make small bundles. Wrap with rubber bands. Hang on clothesline and have them well-spaced in shaded location with warm air circulation. To prevent dust, cover with a paper bag, with small holes cut in it for ventilation.

Drying Screens or Baskets: Place herbs in single layer and space somewhat apart so they get good air circulation. I like to place my herbs on clean window screens and then store them on a wooden clothing/drying rack in front of the wood stove. I make sure that there is about 10-12 inches in between my screens. Again, allowing for good air flow.

How to Store Dried Herbs:

Always make sure your herbs are DRY before storing them. Dried herbs will be nice and crisp (or hard depending on the part of the plant). The dried plant part can be garbled (chopped into smaller pieces) or left in its entirety. For a long shelf life, keep your herbs in an airtight container. Amber colored jars are great storage containers that keep from light exposure. Store container in a cool place out of direct light. Remember, light, heat, moisture and exposure to air deteriorate dried plants.

