



Creative Gardener

...inspiring gardeners to create

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A Taste for Herbs

Popular Herbs for Seasoning

Basil: a strong clove-anise flavor

Chives: delicate onion taste

Cilantro: pungent, lemony taste. Familiar in Mexican dishes.

Dill: light, fragrant smell of pickles

Marjoram: mellower version of Oregano

Mint: potent, cool and refreshing

Oregano: strong, aromatic, familiar in Italian cooking

Parsley: mild taste, the Italian flat-leaved variety is more flavorful than common curly varieties.

Rosemary: pine-like taste that holds up strong in roasting and grilling

Sage: dry, earthy aroma, familiar in poultry stuffing

Tarragon: subtle, yet distinct, anise flavor

Thyme: pungent flavor, a bit menthol-like with lemon-peel aroma

Flavor Match

Beef: Rosemary, Bay, Chives, Oregano, Sage

Poultry: Marjoram, French Tarragon, Thyme

Fish: Dill, Lemon Thyme, Parsley

Fruit: Mint, Lavender, Rose Geranium

Soups: Parsley, Basil, Dill, Oregano

Salads: Chives, French Tarragon, Parsley

Tips for success!

- If the main base of the recipe is liquid (like vinegar or tea), use fresh or dried herbs. Fresh will have the best flavor. If the recipe is dry (like sugar or salt rubs), you need to use dried herbs.
- When harvesting, use scissors to cut them, don't pull or pluck.
- During the growing season, leave four inches of the stem on leafy annuals. Cut about a third of the stem on leafy perennials.
- To keep dried kitchen herbs at their best, store them away from stove in tightly covered glass jars.

Harvest

Herbs are at the most flavorful and fragrant in the morning after the dew dries. This is the best time to harvest. If the herbs are dirty, you may want to water them lightly before you pick.

What Part to Harvest

Leaves: Young leaves have the highest amount of flavor and fragrance, so harvest these as needed.

Flowers: Harvest just as the plant begins to flower. Pick no later than its peak of flowering or the color and taste will fade.

Seeds: Pick just before they fully ripen, cut the stalks and tie into bundles. Invert inside a brown paper bag and hang to dry. As the seeds dry out they will fall into the bag and can easily be shaken loose from the dried flower heads.

Drying and Preserving

Hang drying is the most popular way to preserve herbs. Pick a dark airy place to hang them. Avoid direct sunlight and store in an area with good air circulation around the hanging herb bundles. Harvest long stems and bundle the herbs with rubber bands. A folding wooden dowel laundry rack is the perfect space saver to hang herb bundles on. If you prefer, you can invert the herb bundle into a brown paper bag. The bag will keep herbs dust free and any dried pieces will fall into the bag. You can then shake or thresh the bundle inside the bag. Remove the stems and any unwanted pieces and pour the contents into glass jars for storage. It is best to store leaves whole and break them down at the time of use.

When growing leafy herbs for seasoning like Basil or Mint, don't allow the plants to bloom. Otherwise much of the flavor will be lost to the flowers.

Any Herb! Use what you have in the garden to experiment and get to know herb flavors.

Herb Butter

1 cube unsalted Butter
1 teaspoon lemon juice
2-3 tablespoons fresh herb, chopped
Softened butter, add remaining ingredients, cream together well, place in tightly covered container and refrigerate overnight for best flavor. A classic blend is made with chives for a baked potato topper or garlic for hot French bread.

Simple Herb Syrup

2 cups sugar
2 cups water
½ cup tightly packed fresh herb
Bring water and sugar to a boil in a glass pan, stir until sugar is dissolved. Reduce heat and add herb. Simmer gently 5 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely. Store in a glass jar in the refrigerator to use as needed. Add to cookie dough. Tea or pour over ice cream to infuse a sweet herbal flavor.

Herb Vinegar

1 cup firmly packed fresh herb
2 cups white wine vinegar
Wash herbs and remove any discolored leaves. Pack into a sterilized glass jar large enough to hold all ingredients with some headspace. Add the vinegar and seal. Shake gently. Allow to steep in a sunny window for 10 days. Do a taste test, if the vinegar has a nice, strong herbal fragrance and flavor it is ready. If not, add more fresh herbs and bruise the leaves gently in the vinegar mix and allow to steep for another week. Strain out herbs and re-bottle in a jar for use straight onto salads or blended with olive oil for a dressing to use on warm pastas or deli sandwiches. Can be used as a meat marinade to tenderize and flavor.
Herb Sugar

Wash a thoroughly dry fresh herb leaves. Place approximately an inch of sugar in the bottom of a jar. Add a leaf or two, repeat sugar and leaf layers until the jar is full. Let stand up to two weeks. The sugar will be infused with the herbal flavor and can be used in recipes and coffee or tea.



Herbal Cream Cheese

8 ounce package of Cream Cheese, softened
1 tablespoon chopped fresh herb.
Cream together ingredients until well mixed. Refrigerate overnight. If desired sprinkle dried chopped herb on the surface of the cheese. Serve on crackers, bagels or warm breadsticks.

Herb Tea

Boil water in a teakettle. Transfer boiling water into a warmed glass or ceramic teapot. Add a handful of fresh herb leaves and allow to steep for at least 10 minutes, longer for stronger tea.

Herbal Sun Tea

Fill a gallon glass jar half way with fresh, clean herbal leaves. Loosely packed. Fill the jar with cold water. Place in the sun and allow to steep for 4 to 6 hours. Strain out herbs before serving.

Another herb tea option: Use a favorite type of tea such as green tea or Darjeeling and add 1 cup of fresh herb leaves. Steep in the sun as above recipe. Remove the tea bags and herbs before serving. Serve with herbal ice cubes.

Herb Ice Cubes

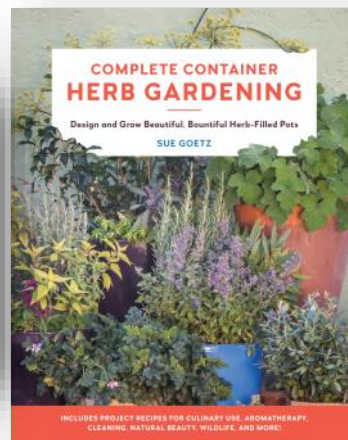
Wash and clean fresh herb leaves. Add a leaf or two or approx. 1 teaspoon of herb to each ice cube section in an ice cube tray. Cover with cold water and freeze solid. Pop out cubes and store in freezer bags. Use mint cubes in teas. Make basil and oregano cubes to add to sauces and soups during cooking.

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