



CREATIVE GARDENER

... inspiring gardeners to create!

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Grow - Harvest - Preserve

Getting the Best from Herbs in Your Garden

- **Basil** (*Ocimum*): landscape design, edible leaves, container gardens. Annual, needs warmth and full sun.
- **Chamomile** (*Chamaemelum nobile*) Landscape design, bee attraction, edible flowers, healing, Zone 4. Herbaceous perennial. Full sun to part shade. Grows up to 12 inches tall.
- **Chives** (*Allium spp.*) landscape design, bee attraction, edible flowers, and stems, cutting garden, Zone 4. Easy to grow in a sunny, well-draining location.
- **Lavender** (*Lavandula spp.*) Landscape design, edible flowers, aromatherapy, cutting garden, healing. Zone 5. Herbaceous to semi-evergreen perennial. Varieties grow from 12 inches to 4 feet tall. Full sun. Prefers dry rocky soil, dislikes too much compost or richness.
- **Lemon Verbena** (*Aloysia triphylla*): landscape design, aromatherapy, edible leaves. Tender shrubby, perennial, treated as an annual below zone 7.
- **Mint** (*Mentha spp.*) container gardens, edible leaves, healing herb. Zone 4. Herbaceous spreading perennial. Grows up to 2 feet tall. Like rich moist soil in full sun.
- **Oregano** (*Origanum spp.*) landscape design, cutting gardens, edible flowers, bee and butterfly attraction. Zone 4. Herbaceous perennial. Some species are tender to frost. Growth habits are both upright and spreading to 3 feet. Needs sun & well-drained soil.
- **Parsley** (*Petroselinum crispum*) landscape design, edible leaves, healing. Biennial, typically grown as an annual. Like full sun and well-draining soil.
- **Roses** (*Rosa rugosa*) landscape design, edible flowers, and rose hips, aromatherapy, cutting gardens, healing. Zones 2-7. Shrub. Needs sun. Height 4 to 6 feet. Rugosa roses are disease and pest resistant. They also tolerate cold winters. Deer tend to leave spiny, shrubby rugosa roses alone.
- **Rosemary** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) landscape design, culinary, aromatherapy, healing. Zone 7. Perennial. The trailing rosemary Prostratus Group are not hardy below zone 7. The upright variety *R. officinalis* 'Arp' has been proven to be the hardiest and is known to overwinter in zone 5. Needs full sun and well-draining soil.
- **Thyme** (*Thymus spp.*) landscape design, edible leaves, container gardens, Zone 4. Full sun, low growing (under 12 inches) herbaceous perennial. Will stay evergreen in mild winter areas. Tolerates dry, rocky soils.

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.

When growing leafy herbs like basil & mint for seasoning and teas, don't allow the plants to bloom. Otherwise much of the flavor will be lost to the flowers.

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. It is best to store leaves whole and break them down at the time of use.

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

Culinary

Herb Butter

1 cube unsalted butter
1 teaspoon lemon juice
2-3 tablespoons fresh herb, chopped
Soften 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 butter on warm 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 herbs. Simmer gently 5 minutes. Do not allow to overheat or burn. Remove from heat and cool completely. Store in a glass jar in the refrigerator. Adds sweet herb flavor to tea, cocktails or poured over ice cream.

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. Toss as a dressing onto salads or blend with olive oil to use on warm pastas or deli sandwiches. Can be used as a meat marinade to tenderize and flavor.

Natural Skin Care & Healing

Herbal Water

8 ounces of pure water
1-3 ounces dried herb
3 drops essential oil
Create an infusion from the water and herbs. Gently simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Allow herb infusion to cool completely. Strain off the herb materials. Place the infusion in a jar and add essential oil if desired. Shake well for each use.

Herb Toner

1 Tablespoon crushed dried or fresh herb
1 cup witch hazel
6 drops of essential oil, if desired
Combine ingredients in a tightly lidded glass jar in a cool dark place. Allow steeping for 2 weeks. Shake care a few times during the two weeks. Strain out the herb and bottle into a sterilized glass jar. Shake well before each use.

Herbal Spa Salt Glow

see the chapter "Top to Bottom Scrub Experience starting on page 128 in the Herbs Lover's Spa Book
1 cup of fine sea salt
2 cups coconut oil
10 to 20 drops of essential oil (optional)
¼ cup crumbled or finely cut herb
Place all ingredients in a wide mouth jar. Blend well.
To Use: Dampen skin. Massage the mixture into the skin. Use carefully on sensitive or damaged skin.

Housekeeping

Linen Spray

To 4 ounces of water, simmer approx. ½ cup of herbs. Allow to cool and strain out the herb. Pour into a spray mister and add 5-10 drops of an essential oil to enhance. Shake well before each use. Test fabric before spraying, essential oils may stain.

Natural Soft Scrub Cleaner

Harvest leaves and stems from your container garden to make this fragrant, mildly abrasive scrub to clean sink, tubs, countertops, and glass stovetops.
¾ cup baking soda
¼ cup dried herb leaves, any of the above in combination or alone
¼ cup unscented castile soap
1 tablespoon water
Combine the baking soda and herbs. Pulse the mix a few times in a spice or coffee bean grinder to break down the herbs into the soda. You don't want it to be a fine dusty powder, so it may take only a few taps to pulse the grinder. In a small bowl, add the castile soap and water. Stir until it is a well-mixed paste. If it is too runny, add more soda and herbs; if too thick, add more water. You want it to be a spreadable consistency like toothpaste. You can add a few drops of rosemary or peppermint essential oil to ramp up the aroma and cleaning qualities. Mix well. Store in a glass jar.

Herbal Dryer Sheet

Place a few drops of herbal essential oil on a washcloth and toss in the dryer with a load of clothes to freshen laundry. Reuse and refresh with oil as needed.

Thank you for attending my talk. These recipes are for personal use. Please do not copy without permission.

Recipes, ideas and inspiration at HerbLoversGarden.com

