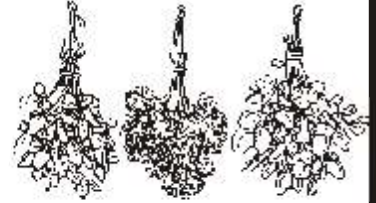




HERBS



Growing

Most herbs need full sun (5 to 8 hours daily) and can be planted in beds or containers.

Beds - Prepare soil as for a vegetable garden, making sure that the area has good drainage. Herbs can also be used as ground covers (Creeping Thyme) or borders (Lavender, Parsley).

Containers - Use a good quality potting soil such as PRO-MIX Ultimate Container Mix or Organic Bedding Mix in strawberry jars, clay pots or moss covered wire baskets. Topiaries can be made from woody varieties such as Lavender, Rosemary and Bay.

Selection

Herbs are best harvested in the morning, after the dew has evaporated, but before the sun has warmed them. The oils that give herbs their aromas and flavors are volatile (readily escapes from the leaves, seeds and stems if injured.) Therefore, herbs need to be handled very gently, and should never be "stacked" or handled in such a way that they may be bruised. Select just enough herbs to be used, dried or frozen, the same day. Herbs should look fresh and clean, be free of disease, not discolored or damaged.

Storage

Since the flavor and aroma of herbs deteriorates quickly after picking, be prepared to use them immediately. If you must store them for a few hours, keep them in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag. When you are ready to use them, wash the herbs gently under cool (not cold) water and pat dry between paper towels.

To Freeze: Clean herbs, chop or puree, fill ice cube trays with chopped herbs and a little water. When frozen, remove from tray and store in freezer containers or freezer bags.

To Dry: Wash herbs and leave on stems. Spread on a cookie sheet and dry in the oven on very low heat leaving oven door ajar. It will take several hours. Herbs can also be dried in the microwave: Place 4 or 5 clean stems between paper towels and microwave on high for 2-3 minutes.

To Air Dry: Bundle herbs and secure with a rubber band. Rinse and shake dry, then hang them upside down in complete darkness. They will need a temperature of 90-100° and excellent ventilation. For best flavor, keep dried herbs in whole or nearly whole condition until ready to use. Store in glass jars in a dark place.



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Cooking With Herbs

Once you have used fresh herbs in cooking you will be spoiled! Their special flavor and aroma contributes greatly to the enjoyment of food. Start to experiment using small amounts of herbs and see what you like.

The following ideas may help you get started:

- A good general rule of thumb is not to mix two very strong herbs together, but rather one strong and one or more milder flavors to complement both the stronger herb and the food.
- In general, the weaker the flavor of the main staple item, the lower the level of added seasoning required to achieve a satisfactory balance of flavor in the end product.
- Dried herbs are stronger than fresh, and powdered herbs are stronger than crumbled. A useful formula is: 1/4 teaspoon powdered herbs = 3/4 to 1 teaspoon crumbled = 2 teaspoons fresh.
- Leaves should be chopped very fine because the more cut surface exposed the more flavor will be released. Be conservative in the amount of an herb used until you're familiar with its strength. The aromatic oils can be strong and objectionable if too much is used.
- The flavoring of herbs is lost by extended cooking. Add herbs to soups or stews about 45 minutes before completing the cooking. But for cold foods such as dips, cheese, vegetables and dressings, herbs should be added several hours or overnight before using.
- For casseroles and hot sauces, add finely chopped fresh or dried herbs directly to the mixture.
- To become familiar with the specific flavor of an herb, try mixing it with margarine or butter, let it set for at least an hour, and spread on a plain cracker.
- Try herbs as a flavoring in vinegars or butters. Use one cup of bruised leaves for every 2 cups of white wine vinegar. Allow to steep for two weeks. Use 1 tablespoon of finely chopped fresh herbs to 1/2-cup margarine, butter, cottage cheese, low fat yogurt or cream cheese.



Culinary Herb Uses

Anise	Pork, chicken, fish, stews, beverages, stewed fruit. Seeds in baked goods.
Basil	Tomatoes & tomato dishes, vinegars, rice, eggs, meats, duck, salads, vegetables.
Chive	Salads, stews, appetizers, vegetables, butter, yogurt, & sour cream sauces
Dill	Fish & fish sauces, cottage cheese, breads, beets, cucumbers, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, salads.
Fennel	Tomato dishes, eggs, fish, marinades for meats, carrots, pickles, breads & baked goods.
Marjoram	Stews, soups, meats, tomato dishes, vegetables, eggs, breads, French dressing.
Mint	Salads, lemonade, tea, potatoes, scallops, sauces & jelly, sherbet, lamb, fruit.
Oregano	Italian tomato sauces, barbecue sauce, soups, eggs, cheese, pork, vegetables, salad dressings.
Parsley	Tomato sauces, fish, meats & poultry, soups, stews, vegetables.
Rosemary	Lamb, pork, vegetables, chowders, cheese.
Sage	Fish, meat, poultry stuffing, chowders, soups, tomatoes.
Savory	Pork, chowders, stews, fish, eggs, salads, beans, biscuits.
Tarragon (French)	Eggs, yogurt & sour cream dishes, meat asparagus, beans, cucumbers.
Thyme (Lemon or English)	Stews, clam chowder, fish, meat, poultry, eggs, stuffing, bread, biscuits, lima beans, broccoli, onions.



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