



Basic Herbs for a Kitchen Garden

There's almost nothing more satisfying than picking fresh grown herbs from your own garden to spice and season your cooking in the kitchen. Herbs are delightfully easy to grow and provide pleasure to the taste bud and to the nose.

The obvious place to grow a kitchen herb garden is close to the kitchen in a sunny location. If space is a problem, herbs can successfully be grown in pots where you can move them around for optimum growth. Herbs need six hours of full midday sun for optimum growth; four hours is minimum for adequate growth.



When growing in the ground, provide loose, well-drained moderately fertile soil (dig in plenty of compost before planting). Herbs do not require heavy amounts of fertilizer. In containers, plant herbs in a high quality planting mix and fertilize with a 7-5-7 blend over the growing season. Water when the soil is dry. Whether they are grown in pots or in the ground, herbs do not tolerate wet soggy soils. Herbs grow well with very little care.

Herb	Botanical Name	Annual/ Perennial	Plant Size	Plant in	Start with	Harvest Time	Sun Requirements	Soil depth minimum	Pests	Uses
Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	A	1 - 2 feet	Spring	Seeds or seedlings	Summer	Full sun	8 inches	Slugs & snails	Pesto, herb vinegars & flavorings, vegetables & salads. Important seasoning in Italian dishes. For best aroma and flavor, shred gently with fingers.
Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	P	12 inches	Fall or spring	Seeds or seedlings	Spring thru fall with constant cutting	Full sun	6 inches	Slugs	Good with butter, sour cream, cheeses, eggs, meats, vegetables, salads & soups. Better used fresh as they do not dry well. Delicate oniony flavor with a hint of pepper from stems and flowers.
Cilantro Coriander	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	A	12 - 36 in. T 8 - 12 in. W	Spring or fall	Seeds or seedlings	Summer	Full sun	8 inches	None	Beans, curries, fish, lamb, salsa and stir fry. Mexican and Thai dishes. Known as Chinese parsley. Highly aromatic but quickly loses its flavor when cooked. Fresh leaves (cilantro), seeds (coriander).
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	A	1 - 5 feet depends on variety	Fall or spring	Seeds	Summer into fall	Full sun	12 inches	None	Tasty with eggs, poached fishes especially salmon, potato salad, coleslaw, fresh beets and Hollandaise sauce. Can be used fresh or dried.
Lavender	<i>Lavandula vera</i>	P	1.5 - 4 ft T 1 - 2 ft W	Fall or spring	Seedlings	Summer	Full sun	8 inches drought tolerant	None	Salads, cakes and vinegars. Blend with rosemary and fennel seeds for roasting meat or fish. Essential herb in bouquet garni.
Marjoram	<i>Origanum majorana</i> or <i>Majorana hortensis</i>	A	6 - 12 inches	Spring or fall	Seeds or seedlings	Summer	Full sun or morning sun & partial shade afternoon	6 inches	None	Cheeses, eggs meats, pasta sauces, stews and vegetables. One of the essential herbs in Italian cooking. Can be used fresh but becomes stronger in flavor when dried.

Herb	Botanical Name	Annual/ Perennial	Plant Size	Plant in	Start with	Harvest Time	Sun Requirements	Soil depth minimum	Pests	Uses
Mint	<i>Menthe spicata</i>	P	Varies by type ½ to 2 ft. T	Spring or fall	Seedlings	Spring thru fall	Full sun to partial shade	6 to 8 inches	Slugs & earwigs	Must be grown in containers otherwise considered invasive. Lamb, salads and as a garnish. Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cooking. Fresh mint is more flavorful than dried.
Oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	P	8 – 12 inches Tall & Wide	Spring or fall	Seeds or seedlings	Summer into fall	Full sun/drought tolerant	8 inches	Slugs & snails	As a salt replacement in chicken, vegetables, beans, cheese, eggs, meats, pasta, salsa, soups and stews. Can be used fresh or dried.
Parsley	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	A	6 – 12 inches	Cool weather	Seeds or seedlings	Spring thru fall	Full sun with partial afternoon shade	8 inches	None	Extensively used for cooking in European and Middle Eastern countries. Is one of the ingredients for bouquet garni. Enhances the flavors and appearance of most foods. Used as a side garnish to freshen breath.
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus species</i>	P	1 – 2 feet	Spring	seedlings	All year	Full sun	8 inches	Spider mites	Roasts, vegetables, chicken, breads, cheese, vinegars and stuffings. It is one of the most fragrant of the kitchen herbs with its' bold assertive flavor.
Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	P	1 – 3 feet	Spring	Seeds or plant cuttings	Summer & fall	Full sun, drought tolerant	8 inches	None	Mainly in stuffings but also with apples, beans, butters, cheeses, soups and stews. Used with butter to brush on grilled goods.
Thyme	<i>Thymus species</i>	P	6 – 12 inches Tall & Wide	Spring or fall	Seeds or seedlings	Summer	Full sun to partial shade	6 inches	None	Breads, casseroles and tomato based sauces. Mandatory herb in French cooking. Teamed with parsley, marjoram and bay for a classic bouquet garni.

Drying Herbs

While in season, fresh herbs are a culinary delight. However, abundance or end of season makes drying a prudent choice for gardeners.

Make sure the herbs for drying are clean and free of pests. Find a spot indoors that is warm and has good air circulation (above a refrigerator is a good place). If drying a small amount at any time, lay branches on a paper towel or plate. If you have large amounts, bundle them together with rubber bands and hang upside down from a dowel or curtain rod. It will take anywhere from a few days to a couple of weeks. When leaves crumble to the touch, they are ready for the next step. If you choose, you can leave them whole (which will retain their flavor better) or crumble (because of storage space). Store them away from direct sunlight in glass containers with tight fitting lids. Be sure to label what they are.

For seeds (such as fennel or caraway) clip the heads that are starting to look brown and brittle. Scrunch the seed heads in your hand over a large bowl. Discard stems. Set your oven at the lowest temperature (200 degrees F). Spread seed in one layer on a cookie sheet or pie pan and bake at least 1 hour or until they are no longer flexible when trying to bend in half. Store in glass jars. Herbs will retain their flavor for at least a year (or until the next growing season).



This information courtesy of:
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