



Herb growing is a rewarding hobby for home gardeners that can be carried out in a window or in the corner of a yard. A plot 10 feet by 10 feet is sufficient to grow a year's supply of tasty herbs.

The most important requirements for herb plants are well-drained, rich soil and plenty of sunshine and adequate water. It is better to start growing a few herbs well than to plant too many types and not be able to learn how to grow any of them to full-flavored maturity.

Also keep in mind that some herbs, such as mint and dill, can quickly become weeds if they are not kept under control. It is usually more difficult to produce top-quality seed herbs such as caraway, dill, and anise than it is to produce leafy herbs. A good list for beginners to start with includes perennials such as sage, tarragon, chives, and thyme and annuals such as summer savory, marjoram, and basil.

Common Name	Latin Name	Annual, Biennial, Perennial (Hardiness Zone)	Planting Instructions	Plant Part to Use	Culinary Uses	Comments
Anise	<i>Pimpinella anisum</i>	Annual	Start seeds indoors, plant 8" apart	Leaves, seeds	Liquor, baking, Chinese dishes, salads	Spread seed stalks on paper to dry; store in sealed container in cool, dry place
Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Annual	Start seeds indoors or buy transplants, plant 8" apart	Leaves	Meats, soups, salads, sauces	Grows to 12" tall; pinch flower buds to encourage branching; prefers hot, sunny area
Caraway	<i>Carum carvi</i>	Biennial (Zone 3)	Sow indoors or directly outside, thin to 18" apart	Seeds	Pickles, baking, vegetables	Flowers and sets seeds the second year, grows to 15" tall, harvest and store like anise

Common Name	Latin Name	Annual, Biennial, Perennial (Hardiness Zone)	Planting Instructions	Plant Part to Use	Culinary Uses	Comments
Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	Perennial (Zone 3)	Buy transplants, plant 6" apart	Shoots, use flowers for garnish	Salads, soups	Mild onion flavor, use shoots fresh or dried flowers, edible
Coriander (cilantro)	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Annual	Sow seed directly outside, thin to 4" apart	Young leaves or seeds	Breads, salsa, many Mexican, Caribbean, Chinese dishes	Plants may grow to 2' tall, seeds can be harvested and stored like anise, short-lived, sow every 30 days
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	Annual	Sow seed directly outside, thin to 18" apart	Seeds or leaves	Salads, vegetable dishes, pickling, vinegar	May produce seed first year, harvest leaves as needed before seed set, reseeds and can become weedy
Marjoram	<i>Origanum majorana</i>	Annual	Buy transplants since seeds are tiny and difficult to handle	Leaves	Soups, meats, casseroles, salads	Propagate by cuttings or division once established, good for containers
Mint	<i>Mentha</i> spp.	Perennial (Zone 4)	Buy transplants	Leaves	Jellies, jams, drinks	Root easily from stem cuttings, dry and store for winter use, can become invasive
Oregano	<i>Origanum</i>	Annual	Buy transplants since seeds are tiny	Leaves	Soups, meats, casseroles, salads	Propagate by cuttings or division, good for containers
Parsley	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	Biennial (Zone 4)	Buy transplants, seeds are slow to germinate	Leaves	Salads, soups, garnish, meat dishes	Use fresh or dried, do not allow to go to seed if using for culinary purposes, goes to seed second year

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Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Annual	Buy transplants	Leaves	Meats, soups, salads	Woody plant, not hardy in Wyoming, flowers edible
Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Perennial (Zone 5), Annual Zones 2, 3, 4	Thin to 2" apart or buy transplants	Leaves	Stuffing/dressing, cheese, sausage, meat dishes	Produce abundant foliage, grow to 2' tall, prune to keep tender new shoots growing, use fresh or dried
Savory, summer	<i>Satureja hotenis</i>	Annual	Thin to 12" apart or buy transplants	Leaves	Meats, casseroles, fish, soups, vegetables	Also called European mint, plants get about 12" tall
Savory, winter	<i>Satureja montana</i>	Perennial (Zone 5)	Buy transplants, 18" apart	Leaves	Meats, casseroles, fish, soups, vegetables	Woody shrub, use only tender tips, use like summer savory or thyme
Tarragon, French	<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i> var. <i>sativa</i>	Perennial (Zone 4)	Buy transplants, 18" apart	Leaves	Vinegar, meats, salads	Propagate easily from stem cuttings or division, use leaves fresh, cut off flowers, plants do not produce seed, Russian tarragon not as flavorful
Thyme	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Perennial (Zone 4)	Buy transplants, 18" apart	Leaves	Meats, casseroles, fish, soups, vegetables	Propagate easily from cuttings or division, good in containers, excellent groundcover

CULTIVATION

Most herbs need a sunny location with at least eight hours of sun each day. Well-drained soil is also important. Before planting, incorporate good-quality organic matter to a depth of about 6 inches. Most herbs require low levels of fertilizer. Preplant slow-release types work well and should last all summer long. Most herbs require consistent watering, especially early in the season when they are young. These herbs include parsley, basil, chives, and mint. Many require little extra water; thyme and sage are in this category. Perennial herbs will require winter watering as well.



DRYING AND PRESERVING

To dry herbs, cut them just before the flowers open. At this point, oils are most concentrated in the foliage, and flavor will be maintained if stored properly. Cut the stems in the morning, tie them together at the cut ends, and hang them upside down in an airy, well-ventilated, dark area away from direct sunlight. Strip the leaves when they are crispy and store them in airtight jars. Another way to dry herbs is to strip the leaves and then lay the leaves flat on screens in an airy, well-ventilated area in a dark place away from sunlight. Store in airtight jars after they are crispy.

For herbs grown for their seeds, harvest the seed heads or pods when they turn brown. Dry them on paper or in paper bags until the seeds come loose. Then store the seeds in airtight containers.

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