

Growing Herbs

Herbs are so easy to grow, usually disease resistant, beautiful to look at and very useful. Many that are listed below are perennials, meaning they will last for years. Annuals are just as desirable but the plants need to be replaced every year. The small investment in a few plants will more than pay for themselves compared to buying the bottled dried herbs or a sprig in the grocery store.

Growing herbs in containers takes very little effort. Start with a commercial potting soil (not garden soil), and fill an attractive container of your choice, ceramic or plastic. When choosing plants for each container, consider if they are all sun loving or prefer part shade so you can group them for their specific needs. Here are just a few ideas of plants to select.

Basil (annual – grows for one season only). Needs full sun but protection from wind and scorching sun. Several varieties to select from. Moist but well-drained soil. Harvest leaves and use throughout the summer, pinching flowers off to prolong your harvest. Can be dried, frozen or stored in olive oil and used in a multitude of recipes.

Chives (perennial) A member of the onion family, its bulbs can be divided in the fall to increase plants or it self sows from seeds. Does well in full sun or part shade. Moist, well drained soil conditions. Very easy to grow, and has pretty pink flowers once you're through harvesting. Grass-like stems can be dried or frozen to preserve or just bring the plant indoors during winter and continue to enjoy fresh chives.

Dill (annual – grows for one season only). Likes full sun. Will produce seeds for next year's plants. Harvest small amount of leaves from plants or seed heads. Especially known for use in potato salads and pickles, rich in minerals and helps digestion.

Sage (perennial) Many varieties, so have fun checking them out. Full sun and drier soil rather than moist. Harvest the leaves before the flowers appear. Used in meat dishes primarily. Dry leaves slowly to preserve.

Rosemary (perennial) Again, many varieties to choose from. Well-drained moist soil. Requires full sun, protection from strong winds and extreme cold during winter. Harvest all year long, or dry leaves. Easy to grow.

Parsley (biannual – growing cycle is two years) Sun to partial shade. Likes moist well-drained soil. Use as garnish in salads, sauces, soups, etc. Dry or freeze the leaves to preserve.

Lemon Balm (perennial) Grows easily indoors as well as outdoors. Very fragrant member of the mint family. Protect from harsh sun. Uses include leaves added to salads, soups, and stews. Dry leaves to preserve.

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