



Growing Herbs in Your Garden

Planning and Design:

First, decide on the style or type of herb garden that you would like to grow. You may want to invest in a resource guide to learn about different herbs and their uses.

At a Glance

Planning and Design:

Decide on a type of herb garden, herbs for cooking and teas, practical or medicinal use

Choose a location that will receive adequate sunlight, and build a barrier if animals may disturb plants

Selecting Herbs:

Decide on annual, perennial, or tender perennial varieties, bearing in mind local climate and the hardiness of particular plants

Always acclimate herbs grown in greenhouses!

Care Guidelines:

Amend rocky, sandy, or clay-heavy soil with compost; water according to the needs of each plant, taking weather and season into account; fertilize regularly based on needs

Here are some examples of possible types of herb gardens:

- Herb garden for teas
- Mediterranean garden, for spicing up home cooking
- Garden for making plant dyes
- Medicinal herb garden including, but certainly not limited to: Herbs for the skin, stomach, immune system, mental health, and general strength. You may also want your herb garden to have a spiritual theme. You could also consider incorporating herbs into your existing perennial garden

Next, you will need to do a site survey. Ask yourself these questions:

- How much light will this garden receive, and what type of light will be available during each season
- What kind of soil is in your garden, is it mostly clay, or sand? What is the pH of the soil? What was growing there in the past? The answers to these questions may help determine which herbs you will have the most success in growing
- Will pets, either yours or a neighbor's, have access to the garden, or potentially use it as a litter box? If so, you should consider creating a barrier, especially if the herbs are to be consumed or used in any sort of topical treatment

Selecting Herbs for your Garden:

There is a wide variety of herbs to choose from:

- Perennial herbs (return year after year)
- Annual herbs (need to be re-planted yearly)



- Tender perennial herbs (may require extra care and special conditions in order to return after a harsh winter)
- If you intend to consume the herbs in cooking or teas, or to use them in anything that will be applied topically, you may want to consider selecting herbs that are organic

Some herbs can be a nuisance if they are allowed to grow unchecked, spreading far and wide, possibly into areas they are not wanted. Mint, and herbs in the mint family, can spread quickly and over large areas. Feverfew, Blue Vervain, Lemon Balm (mint), and Monarda (mint) are also sometimes guilty of this.

One thing you can do to control some spreading is to remove the seed heads from the plants. St John's Wort spreads under *and* above ground by roots, as does most of the mint family, so you may want to contain them in pots planted above ground.

Soil Amendment:

More than likely, you will need to start by improving upon the existing soil in your garden. It is also recommended, for most gardens, to add compost in order to increase the amount of nutrients available to your herbs. Compost can be mixed and worked into the existing soil directly, using just your hands as you would a tiller.

Caring for your Herb Garden:

Important: *Before planting in the ground*, you will need to "harden off" any herb plants purchased from a garden center or greenhouse in order to acclimate them to being outdoors.

This can be achieved by putting the herbs (in their pots) outside during the day, in an area that receives some filtered light at first, and move gradually into more sunlight, as long as the temperature is above 40 degrees or so.

If the temperature remains in that range at night, you may leave them out, but if it's cooler, they will need to be brought indoors either in a garage, or another situation where they are protected.

This process is recommended for the first week or so, and the herbs should only be planted outside once nighttime temperatures are at or above 40 degrees.

Water your plants:

- Know the moisture requirements of your particular plants, and water accordingly
- Keep in mind the type of soil that your herbs are planted in, and take into account how quickly or slowly water is absorbed or evaporated
- You'll also want to pay attention to the weather, and know that moisture needs change with the seasons



Types of Fertilizer to Consider:

- Fish emulsion is a great fertilizer for most herbs
- Mile Hi Rose Food and Sea Kelp
- Worm tea from a wormery

Pest Control:

- Most of the time, a strong jet of water will knock a lot of the pests off of your plants
- A combination of insecticidal soap and water will also work on most bugs, but you should be mindful of the time of day it is applied

Lastly, wait, watch, harvest, and enjoy!

Resources:

[Growing 101, Medicinal Herbs](#) by Tammi Hartung

[Bountiful Container](#) by McGee & Stuckey