

## GROW YOUR OWN SAVORY HERBS

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### CREATE GOURMET DISHES WITH HERBS

The use of herbs in cooking imparts a delicate and delicious flavor to many dishes. Chefs throughout the world use various herbs to accent the flavor of foods which might otherwise be bland to the taste. Gravies, soups, eggs, beef, poultry, fish, lamb, salads and other prepared dishes become a gourmet's delight with the flavoring of herbs. Some herbs are used alone while others are blended to give a more aromatic flavor. Most cookbooks give specific directions for the kinds and amounts of herbs to use with various foods.

### GROWING HERBS AT HOME

There are numerous kinds of herbs; some can be easily grown and others require very exacting climatic requirements not found in Arizona. The gardener should be aware of the growth habits of herb plants. Some are tender annuals, some are small perennial plants which develop into woody shrubs varying in height from several feet to as high as twenty feet. Many species of herbs can be successfully grown in containers, the flower or vegetable garden, and some can be utilized in the landscaping of the home grounds.

### EASILY GROWN HERBS

Gardeners in the high elevations of Arizona can maintain their herb plants during the winter months by placing the potted plants indoors near sunny windows.

Pertinent information is listed for each of the following herbs that can be easily grown under home conditions.

**SWEET BASIL** is a tender annual and thrives best in sunny locations. It is killed by freezing temperatures and should be seeded after all danger of frost has passed. The seed can be planted in the garden or in containers. Leaves can be used fresh or dried and stored.

**CHIVES** belong to the onion family and are well adapted to being grown in containers. During the summer heat or winter cold, move plants to protected areas to prolong their life. They do not produce seed, so you must buy the live plants and set them in a container. They multiply rapidly and it will be necessary to thin them out after several years.

**PARSLEY** is the best known herb and is widely used to add color or flavor to most all dishes. It thrives best under cool conditions and can be planted directly in the garden or in containers. It is generally seeded in the fall in the southern part of the state and in summer in the high elevations. The seed germinates slowly so it is best to soak the seed in water overnight before planting.

**SAGE** is another popular herb with many uses in cooking. It is quite hardy and stands a wide range of climatic conditions. Many gardeners in the lower elevations will often use this plant as a border plant for color accent. It lends itself to container growing but likes sunny locations. It can be grown from seed or cuttings.

**MINT** has limited uses as an herb. It is popular as a flavoring for tea and other beverages. It is a rugged herb and thrives in sunny or shady locations. It does very well under high soil moisture conditions and seems to grow best under drippy faucets. It is easily started from rooted stems.

**THYME** is a small, vine-like plant with extremely small stems and leaves. It is a popular pot-grown plant but can also be grown in borders. It tolerates full sun or partial shade. It requires protection from sub-freezing temperatures and intense heat of summer. It can be started from seed or from stem cuttings.

**SWEET MARJORAM** is a small vine-like plant with slightly larger stems and leaves than thyme. It tolerates full sun or partial shade and requires protection from sub-freezing temperatures. Some gardeners use it in planters with overhead protection. It can be grown from seed or stem cuttings.

**ROSEMARY** is a woody perennial and is widely used landscaping the home grounds. Two types are available; a weeping, pendulous type or the upright bush form. Both produce leaves which are prized for their aromatic flavors. Both do best under sunny locations. In the high elevations, one should protect it from temperatures below 10° F. It is easily propagated from stem cuttings.

**BAY LAUREL** is also a woody herb plant used in landscaping. It is an upright bush growing to heights of approximately 20 ft. It is compact in its growth habit and tolerates full sun or shade. It has been known to tolerate temperatures down to 15° F. It makes a highly desirable container plant and lends itself to shearing into many different shapes.

#### **OTHER HERBS TO TRY**

If the gardener provide the proper soil and environmental conditions, the following herbs can be tried.

Dill                      Fennel  
Coriander              Anise  
Cumin                    Garlic  
Summer Savory

#### **SOILS FOR CONTAINER GROWN HERBS**

Herbs thrive under a wide range of soil conditions. If you plan to grow yours in a container, you should take pains to prepare an excellent soil mix to sustain the plants over a long period of time. An excellent mix consists of 1/3 garden soil, 1/3 peat moss or well-rotted barnyard manure and 1/3 sand. Preparation of garden soils should be the same as for the planting of vegetables or flowers.

#### **FERTILIZING CONTAINER PLANTS**

Container grown herbs respond to a fertilizing method known as **constant feeding**. This technique utilizes liquid fertilizers diluted with tap water. A very dilute quantity of the liquid fertilizer is applied at each irrigation. Most liquid fertilizers will have the dilution rate for this method of feeding.

#### **WATERING THE CONTAINER GROWN PLANTS**

Containers used for growing herb plants should have drainage openings on the bottom or sides to permit drainage of excess water and for the removal of salts accumulating in the root zone. Water the plants whenever the surface one inch feels dry to the touch. When watering apply a sufficient amount to permit a small quantity of water to drain out. This will prevent salts from building up in the root zone.

#### **HARVESTING THE HERBS**

Most herbs impart a more delicate flavor if they are used fresh from the plant. If weather conditions are unfavorable for the survival of plants during the winter, they can be cut and the foliage permitted to dry under well-ventilated conditions usually in indirect sunlight. When the dried foliage crumbles easily it can be placed in sealed containers for later use.

#### **A DELICIOUS HERB DISH\***

2 cups fresh Sweet Basil leaves tightly compressed in a cup  
2 cloves fresh garlic (powder can be used)  
4 tablespoons salad oil  
1 cup Parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon salt

Place basil, garlic, oil, salt in blender. Blend until leaves are liquified. After blending, stir in Parmesan cheese and mix well. Spoon the mixture over noodles or any other pasta and mix thoroughly. Add additional Parmesan cheese if desired. Amount of ingredients can be adjusted to your taste desires.