

Tips for Growing a Herb Garden



GROWING A HERB GARDEN

Growing a herb garden is quick, easy and does not require much room. Herbs grow just as well in the ground as they do in pots. They are perfect for small or temporary gardens.

Basil, thyme, oregano, parsley, coriander, rosemary, dill, sage and mint are all easy to grow. When choosing which ones to grow, start with ones you like to use.

Often a recipe requires a small amount of a particular herb, while the supermarket may only sell it in a large bunch. The best thing about growing your own herbs is that you have a constant supply of exactly what you need, when you need it. It is also cheaper, healthier and tastier.

TYPES OF HERBS

There are two main types of herbs:

- *Annual herbs* - grow and die within the same year, such as basil and parsley.
- *Perennial herbs* - grow and live for many years, such as rosemary and thyme.

PLANTING POSITION

Plant in a sunny position. Mediterranean herbs with small tough leaves (e.g. sage and oregano) need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day and tolerate drought, while herbs with large, delicate leaves, such as mint, parsley and coriander, prefer moist soil in partial shade with at least 3-6 hours of direct sunlight.

Another important aspect of where to plant herbs is to make it easily accessible to the kitchen, so it is easy to pop out and harvest while cooking.

SOIL

Herbs require good draining, nutrient rich soil, with added compost or manure.

AT PLANTING

Follow the recommended planting directions for the specific herb seeds or seedlings. Water in well with a weak solution of seaweed or worm wee tea.

WATERING

To begin with, young herbs will need to be watered regularly to maintain a consistently moist soil. However, once the plants are established, they will require less frequent watering.

HARVESTING YOUR LEAFY GREENS

Enjoy harvesting herbs as you need by harvesting the quantity you require on each occasion.

Most herbs are best picked frequently. Pinching out the growing tips encourages bushier, compact growth and reduces the likelihood of annual herbs bolting to seed.

GARDENING IN POTS

A benefit of gardening in pots is that they can be moved to chase or avoid the sun and weather. Another benefit is that renters can feel good about investing in their veggie patch and taking it with them when moving.

While pots can reduce your watering requirements (because you can more closely monitor moisture conditions) pots also dry out faster and need closer attention. Dark pots will absorb more heat and dry out faster than lighter coloured pots. Plants may also need more regular fertilising in pots.

Any pot or container can be planted into, as long as it is large enough to hold the plant and has good drainage. Also consider what the pot is made out of, e.g. some treated wood may contain chemical compounds that could leach into the soil.

PRESERVING

There are several ways to preserve your herbs:

- *Dry* - either air dry by hanging in bunches upside down and storing in a cool, dry place.
- *Freeze* - place on baking paper in the freezer and then when frozen, place into a storage container or bag.
- *Convert* - make them into something delicious with a longer shelf-life, e.g. turning basil into pesto or dill into a sauce.

