

Common and Latin Name, Type	Height, Spacing	How to Start	Uses	Comments
Basil, Sweet <i>Ocimum basilicum</i> Annual	18-24 in. x 12 in.	Transplant Seed	Pesto, tomato dishes, vinegars, salads	Many other cultivars available. Very sensitive to cold weather and refrigeration
Chives <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> Perennial	12 in. x 12 in.	Seed Transplant Division	Mild onion flavor Potatoes, eggs, dips, salads	Flowers are edible Cut to ground to encourage regrowth
Cilantro <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> Annual	24 in. x 12 in.	Direct seed Succession plant	Salsa Mexican & Asian dishes	Foliage and seeds (referred to as coriander) have different flavor Also called Chinese parsley
Dill <i>Anethum graveolens</i> Annual	24-36 in. x 12 in.	Direct seed Succession plant Self seeds	Pickles, fish, green beans, egg & potato salad, cucumbers, breads	Use leaves, seeds, flower heads
Fennel <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Perennial treated as annual	36-48 in. x 12-18 in.	Direct seed Self seeds	Licorice flavor Seafood, bread, pork	All parts of plant edible Host plant for swallowtail butterfly
Mints <i>Mentha spp.</i> Perennial	18-24 in. x 18 in.	Transplant Division	Tea, cold drinks, desserts, lamb, sauces, fruit salads Middle Eastern dishes	Very aggressive—always plant in pot or contained area Varieties may not come true from seed
Oregano <i>Origanum vulgare</i> Perennial	12-24 in. x 12 in.	Transplant	Pizza, Italian sauces, tomato dishes	Greek oregano (<i>Origanum heracleoticum</i>) has best flavor May not come true to taste from seed
Parsley <i>Petroselinum crispum</i> Biennial treated as annual	12-18 in. x 12 in.	Seed Transplant	Brings out flavor of other herbs Curly parsley used for garnish, salads Use Italian parsley in soups, stews	Slow to germinate, soak seeds 24 hours before sowing Italian or flat-leave variety has better flavor for cooking
Rosemary <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> Tender Perennial	3-6 ft. x 12 in.	Transplant	Meats, poultry, soups, breads, potatoes	Not hardy in Zone 5—must be moved indoors in winter
Sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i> Perennial	18-30 in. x 12 in.	Transplant Seed	Stuffing, meats, potatoes, squash	Stands up well to cooking
Thyme <i>Thymus vulgaris</i> Perennial	8-12 in. x 12 in.	Transplant Seed	Pairs well with lemon French cooking	Attracts bees Use for edging or rock garden

For more information on gardening please visit:

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/state/hort.html>

or

call University of Illinois Extension
Knox County
309-342-5108

Other informational brochures can be found online at:
<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/knox/hort3224.html>

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Knox County



Culinary Herbs



Herbs are plants grown for their many benefits: culinary, aromatic, medicinal, and ornamental. Many parts of the plants can be used, including leaves, flowers, stems, seeds, or bulbs. Most herbs require minimal care and are insect and disease resistant.

Herbs grown in your own garden are fresh, inexpensive, convenient, and add flavor to foods without added calories or sodium.

Herbs can be grown in a separate bed or in containers. They can also be mixed in with your vegetables or in flower beds. However, if not placed with plants having similar growing requirements, the herb quality may suffer.

Growing Conditions

Soil should be loose and well drained. Good drainage is very important as most herbs will not tolerate wet feet. Soil with low to moderate fertility is best.

Most herbs perform well and develop the best flavor if grown in full sun (6 or more hours).

Starting Herb Plants

Some herbs have taproots and, therefore, do not transplant well. These seeds should be sown directly in the garden or started in peat pots. Other herbs can be started indoors or purchased as transplants. The best time to sow seeds or put plants out in the garden varies. Check the seed packet or plant tag for specific instructions.

Seeds from annuals which mature quickly, such as cilantro and dill, can be sown every 2-4 weeks until mid summer to ensure a continuous harvest. Many perennial herbs benefit from being divided every 3-4 years, and can provide additional plants to keep or give to others.

Summer Care

Many herbs prefer dryer soils. Provide extra water during dry periods but do not overwater. Annual herbs require more moisture than most perennial herbs, and plants grown in containers will need more frequent watering.

Herbs growing in average to good soil require little if any fertilizer - no more than a light application (1/4 to 1/2 strength of a balanced fertilizer) in early summer for perennial herbs. Annual herbs may benefit from an additional light application after a heavy harvest. Too much fertilizer will produce lots of foliage that has little flavor and is more susceptible to insect and disease problems.

Weed control is important. Weeds compete for nutrients and water, and may harbor insects and diseases.

Pruning or pinching back plants encourages growth. This can also be accomplished by regular harvesting. Remove flower stems unless you're growing the herbs for seeds. Annuals allowed to go to seed will quickly decline, and all herbs generally have inferior flavor once they set seed. Also, remove any weak, dead, or diseased foliage.

Winter Care

Annuals can be harvested until they are killed by frost or freezing temperatures, and then should be removed from the garden.

Perennials should not be fertilized or pruned heavily in late summer or fall. It's best not to encourage tender new growth that won't have time to mature before winter. After the ground has frozen, apply 3-4 inches of loose mulch (such as straw or evergreen boughs) to prevent heaving as the ground thaws and freezes. Do not use materials that

will compact, resulting in excess moisture and root rot.

Tender perennials such as rosemary will need to be potted and brought indoors to survive the winter.

Harvesting Herbs

Ideally, cut no more than 1/3 of the plant at one time to allow the plant to recover. Members of the carrot family (dill, fennel, parsley, cilantro), as well as chives, should be harvested by cutting individual stems at the base of the plant. Cut plants in the mint family (basil, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme) just above a set of leaves.

Herbs can be harvested for fresh use after they have reached moderate size, and then anytime throughout the growing season. Frequent harvesting of young growing tips will promote branching and a more compact shape. Ideally, harvest herbs in the morning after the dew has dried but before the heat of the day, and harvest only what you'll use each day.

Preserving Herbs

Herbs for drying are best harvested just before flower buds have opened, when leaves contain the maximum amount of essential oils. Perennial herbs can be dried by tying stems in small bunches and hanging in a dark, well-ventilated, 70-90 degree room until dry (about 1-2 weeks). When completely dry, remove the leaves and store in an airtight container in a cool, dry, dark location.

Many of the annual herbs do not dry well, but any herb can be preserved by freezing, either in freezer bags or mixed with a small amount of water or other liquid in ice cube trays. Once frozen, remove from trays and store in

plastic freezer bags.

Dried or frozen herbs are best used in cooked dishes as they retain their flavor but may lose color and texture.

Using Herbs

Many herbs, especially annuals, should be added toward the end of cooking for best flavor. Add to salads or use in teas, butters, vinegars, rubs or marinades.

To substitute fresh herbs for dried in recipes, use three times the amount of dried herbs required.

Caution: Homemade herb-flavored oils have been linked to cases of botulism and should only be made for use within 2-3 days, and stored in the refrigerator.

Problems

The oils contained in herb plants naturally protect them from most insects and diseases, but they are not immune. Good cultural practices will give your herb plants the best chance to stay healthy.

Aphids, spider mites, and Japanese beetles are the most common pests found on herb plants. Insects can be handpicked or sprayed with water or insecticidal soap. Prune off the affected area if small.

Chemicals are generally not necessary and should be used cautiously, if at all, on edible plants, and always according to package directions.

Suggested Herbs

Grow what you like and will use, but don't be afraid to try something new. The following chart lists some commonly used herbs that are easy to grow.