



CULINARY HERBS



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HERB Describes a variety of low-growing, non-woody, seed plants valued for their flavor, fragrance, or medical purposes. They usually grow in temperate areas.

CLASSIFICATION BY LIFE CYCLE

Annuals: Anise, Basil, Coriander, and Dill

Biennials: Caraway, Sage

Perennials: Chives, Fennel, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint and Thyme

GROWING REQUIREMENTS, PROPAGATION AND USES OF ANNUAL HERBS

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8110.html>

STARTING SEEDS IN CONTAINERS

- 1) Fill container with potting soil.
- 2) Sow seed using package direction or 2-4x's the diameter of the seed and label the container.
- 3) Maintain Uniform moisture
- 4) Provide constant soil temp of approx. 70 degrees
- 5) When "True" leaves develop, transfer to 4" pot

GROWING REQUIREMENTS, PROPAGATION AND USES OF PERENNIAL HERBS

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8110.html>

ASEXUAL PLANT PROPAGATION

- 1) Simple Herbaceous Cuttings – Mint, Basil, Rosemary
- 2) Stem Cuttings:
 - a) Softwood Cuttings (Spring) – Rosemary,
 - b) Semi-Hardwood Cuttings (Late Summer-Early Fall) – Marjoram, Thyme, Rosemary.
- 3) Layering – Rosemary,
- 4) Division – Chives, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint

GROWING HERBS

- 1) Start with well drained, loamy soil
- 2) Group according to light requirements
- 3) Plant perennials at edge where they won't be disturbed
- 4) Taller plants in background, lower in front
- 5) smaller sized plants do well in 6" pot – Chives, basil, marjoram, mint, rosemary and thyme.

HARVESTING HERBS Harvest herbs when they contain maximum amounts of essential oils: Leafy herbs—just before buds open; Seed herbs—when pod turn brown; Herb flowers—before fully open; Herb roots—Dig in fall after frost, cut into ½" pieces, dry

FOLIAGE GUIDELINES

- 1) Annuals can be harvested until frost;
- Perennials stop one month before frost date.
- 2) Harvest early in the morning after the dew dries, but before the heat of the day.

- Begin harvesting the herb when plant has enough foliage to maintain growth
- Up to 75% of current seasons growth can be harvested at one time
- Harvest no more than 1/3 of woody perennials, or vigor of plant will be compromised next year
- Tender annuals should be harvested above leaf buds where plant branches out
- Annuals will live longer if their flowers are pinched back
- Harvesting the central stem of perennials slows down new growth, take side branches

SHORT TERM STORAGE OF FRESH HERBS

Annuals - store in 1" of water on kitchen counter

Perennials – wrap in damp paper towel in open plastic bag in the refrigerator. Both last up to 1 week.

PRESERVING HERBS Dried Herbs can be kept for 2-3 years, but for best flavor use within one year

- **SIMPLE DRYING** Arrange leaves in a single layer on a paper towel or suspended window screen, out of direct sun for 1 week
- **AIR DRYING** Tie small bunches of herbs with rubberbands, hang upside down in dark, well ventilated room for 2-3 weeks
- **DRIED LEAVES** When leaves crumble easily between your finger, they are dry enough
- **OVEN DRYING** Place leaves in single layer on cookie sheet, set temp at lowest setting, leave oven door ajar
- **MICROWAVE** Lay a single layer of herbs between 2 dry paper towels, microwave for 1-2 minutes on high, Stir every 30 seconds.
Reheat for 30 seconds at a time if not brittle
- **DEHYDRATOR** Follow manufacturer's directions
- **AIR DRYING SEEDS** Tie in bunches and suspend inside a paper bag with holes punched in the sides. Suspend in dark area with good air circulation. Collect seeds when they are dry after 1 week or more.

STORING DRIED HERBS Store whole in air tight containers in cool, dry place away from sunlight. Crush or grind just before use.

FREEZING Place clean, dry herbs in a single layer on tray to freeze. Keep frozen, placed in air tight bag until ready to use. Or freeze chopped leaves topped with water in ice cube trays. Another method is to mix ¼ cup chopped leaves with 2 teaspoons oil, drop teaspoonfuls onto wax paper lined baking sheet and freeze. Then peel off and store in plastic bags.

Visit: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ho/ho74/ho74.pdf> for chart that includes "Harvest" & "Storage"