



## *designing an herb garden*

Herbs are some of the easiest plants to grow – after all, they are basically aromatic weeds that have lost none of their attractive and persistent *joie de vivre* after centuries of cultivation. They are an excellent entry to the love of gardening because all they need is a sunny spot, average soil and some regular clipping – they love being used! Choose the herbs you use regularly in the kitchen and plant them close enough so you WILL go get some for salad tonight. You may choose to plant a designated herb garden in the tradition of cloistered monks and the royal gardeners of Versailles. Herbs don't need a lot of room and can be planted somewhat densely. They vary in texture, height and habit and can be arranged for convenience and/or aesthetics. Another option is to add herbs, especially the annuals, to your vegetable garden or interplant perennial herbs in your flower beds. Many herbs also grow happily in pots on balconies and patios or in a sunny window – look for the designation “P” in the herb chart. Remember to group plants with similar light and moisture needs if you are making a combo planter.

## *selecting and preparing your planting site*

- Choose a site that has at least six hours of direct sun. Many herbs will be fine in partial shade (4-6 hours of sun) but they tend to become straggly, weak, and lacking in taste with less than that.
- Improve soil drainage by digging to the depth of about one spade and incorporating *Soil Perfector* or *Turface* and a good quality compost such as *Dr. Earth Motherland*.
- Raised beds are a great solution to dealing with heavy clay soils and make it easier to add the amendments. Make them narrow enough so you can plant and harvest your herbs without stepping on the soil and causing compaction.
- Once your herb bed is established, keep building up the soil by top-dressing with compost. This means you are mulching with compost that will protect the growing plants while it breaks down and enriches the soil. Other than that, herbs don't need extra fertilizer. In fact, over-fertilizing may reduce the level of essential oils which give the leaves their aroma and flavor.

## *sowing and planting your herbs*

- Some herbs will be sown directly and others are best transplanted – see the herb chart. You may also choose to start your seeds indoors where you can care for them when they are small and then transplant them once they get to be 2-3” tall.
- After you've decided on a design layout, work from the center of the bed outwards, setting out your transplants first.
- Dig a hole for each plant that is the same depth as the pot, but twice as wide. Remove the plant carefully from its pot, taking care not to pull from the stem. Do not disturb the roots unless your plant is extremely root-bound.
- Situate the plant in its hole at the same level of the soil as it was in its pot. Backfill soil halfway up the root ball, add a little water – we like a little *Nature's Source* in the watering can – fill in and firm down the soil and then water again.
- Once the transplants are added you can “mulch” the bed with compost. Then sow your herb seeds into their designated spots directly into that nice loose *Dr. Earth Motherland* and sprinkle gently with the *Nature's Source* enriched water – done!

## *harvesting tips*

- Harvest often and you will have bushier and healthier plants. This will also delay bolting to flower somewhat.
- Essential oils are most intense in the morning – after the dew has dried but before the sun becomes too hot.
- For best flavor, harvest leaves before flowering. Harvest flowers just before opening and allow seeds to dry on the plants.

HERB	SPACING/TYPE	ASPECT	COMMENTS
Basil <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	P 4-8" Annual Direct Sow/Transplant	Full Sun	Moist, rich soil; loves hot weather; harvest regularly to keep from going to flower; many cultivars to choose from – taste test for your favorite
Borage <i>Borago officinalis</i>	12" Annual Direct Sow/Transplant	Full Sun	Medium moist, loose soil; large plant; re-seeds readily; cucumber-flavored flowers used as garnishes and in salads; excellent bee plant
Bay <i>Laurus nobilis</i>	P Tropical Container Plant	Sun to Part Shade	Let soil dry almost completely before watering; readily grows into shrubby houseplant; do not bring outside until nights are consistently above 50°
Chives <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	P 2-8" Perennial Direct Sow/Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, loose soil; cut back to 3" when harvesting; edible flowers; Garlic Chives are also tasty but re-seed vigorously; both are excellent bee plants
Cilantro <i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	2-4" Annual Succession Sow	Full Sun	Medium moist, loose soil; bolts to seed rapidly so harvest regularly; sow seeds at 2 week intervals for continual harvest or allow to freely reseed
Dill <i>Anethum graveolens</i>	2-4" Annual Direct Sow/Transplant	Full Sun	Medium moist, rich soil; sow somewhat densely for leaf, thin to 4" for seed production; hang upside down in a paper bag to dry and collect seeds
Fennel <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	4-6" Tender Perennial Direct Sow/Transplant	Full Sun	Medium moist, rich soil; grow non-bulbing type for leaf, thin to 6" for seed production; hang upside down in a paper bag to dry and collect seeds
Lavender <i>Lavandula spp.</i>	P 12-18" Tender Perennial Transplant/Container	Full Sun	Somewhat dry, gravelly soil; challenging in St. Louis climate – consider keeping as a container plant; flowers used in cooking as well as for sachets
Lemon Balm <i>Melissa officinalis</i>	12" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well-drained, medium rich soil; very vigorous; re-seeds readily and makes a great groundcover; best used fresh – a great iced tea
Lemon Verbena <i>Aloysia triphylla</i>	P 12-18" Tropical Transplant/Container	Full Sun	Medium moist, well-drained, rich soil; best as an annual; gets large and woody but is challenging to over-winter in a pot; clear lemon taste
Lovage <i>Levisticum officinale</i>	18-24" Perennial Direct Sow/Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, medium-rich soil; forms a tall plant for continuous harvest of leaves; excellent mild celery flavor for salads and soups
Marjoram <i>Origanum majorana</i>	P 6-8" Annual Transplant	Full Sun	Drier, well-drained soil; very decorative, milder form of oregano – great in salads; use fresh but also dries well; essential cooking tool; good bee plant
Mint <i>Mentha spp.</i>	12-18" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well-drained, medium-rich soil; spreads by very vigorous runners; give mint its own bed or contain within the garden; many different types
Oregano <i>Origanum vulgare</i>	P 12" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Drier, well-drained soil; can grow quite large; cut back regularly to control size; essential cooking tool; easily dried or harvest during mild winter days
Parsley <i>Petroselinum spp.</i>	8-12" Biennial Direct Sow/Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, medium rich, loose soil; be patient, slow to germinate; do not crowd in the garden; harvest through winter then allow to reseed in spring
Rosemary <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	P 8-24" Tender Perennial Transplant/Container	Full Sun	Drier, well-drained soil; 'Arp' is the hardy cultivar; cultivars have different habits but similar flavor; good choice for wintering inside in pots; dries well
Sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i>	P 12" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Drier, well-drained soil; forms large, woody semi-shrub; trim regularly to keep well-branched, tidy and dense; all cultivars have similar flavor
Salad Burnet <i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	8-12" Perennial Direct Sow/Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Medium moist soil; decorative and tasty salad herb with mild cucumber flavor; somewhat evergreen – makes an easygoing edging plant
Summer Savory <i>Satureja hortensis</i>	8" Annual Direct Sow/Transplant	Full Sun	Drier, well-drained soil; makes a tall, lanky plant; peppery flavor is great with beans and in soup; use fresh but also dries well
Tarragon <i>Artemisia dracunculus</i>	8-12" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Well-drained, medium rich soil; tends to sprawl; sterile flowers – can't be grown by seed; makes <i>fines herbes</i> along with parsley, chives, and chervil
Thyme <i>Thymus spp.</i>	P 6-8" Perennial Transplant	Sun to Part Shade	Drier, well-drained soil; low-growing and vigorous; essential cooking tool; easily dried or harvest during mild winter days; good bee plant
Winter Savory <i>Satureja montana</i>	P 8" Perennial Transplant	Full Sun	Drier, well-drained soil; underused but very useful herb – more pungent than Summer Savory; easily dried or harvest during mild winter days