



Growing Herbs Indoors

Planting

Herbs can be planted in a variety of containers; old tin cans, wooden boxes, crockery, bowls as well as pottery. Sufficient drainage should be provided to ensure that the soil does not become waterlogged. An all purpose potting mix can be used or a mix of 1 part peat moss and 1 part perlite or vermiculite. Herbs can be planted in individual pots or grouped in large containers. A rectangular container is recommended since it would provide adequate light and air circulation to plants. Herbs can be grouped in a variety of themes depending on your whims and desires. Some ideas are:

Traditional Herb Garden - parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme

Italian Herb Garden - basil, oregano, parsley, rosemary, tarragon

Greek Herb Garden - Greek oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary

French Herb Garden - parsley, chives, tarragon, rosemary, thyme, marjoram

Mexican Herb Garden - epasote, cilantro, marjoram, basil

Herbal Tea Garden - horehound, mint, catnip, chamomile, cinnamon basil

Potpourri Garden - lavender, basil, lemon balm, rosemary, thyme

Care of Herb Gardens

Herbs are very easy to care for. Their needs are minimal. Most herbs do not have insect problems due to their strong odors. However, indoors they sometimes suffer from the usual maladies of houseplants.

Light & Air - Find a sunny window, a south or west exposure is best. Most herbs like plenty of light and should be turned from time to time. Herbs should not be crowded among the other plants to allow for adequate circulation.

Temperature - Normal indoor temperatures are sufficient for growing herbs. Warmer temperatures will require more frequent waterings than cooler. The temperature should not drop below 50°F.

Watering & Fertilizing - To decide if your plant needs water, stick your finger about 1/2" into the soil. If the soil feels dry then it is time to water. If it is still wet, don't. If you are the kind to kill a cactus with too much kindness, be careful about overwatering. Overwatering will lead to rot and other problems. Herbs should not be overfertilized. This leads to excessive leaf growth and a reduced level of aromatic oils in the plant. Many experts say not to fertilize at all during the winter months. If you wish to fertilize, do so only once a month using a half dilution of the recommended rate.

Pruning - During the winter months, herbs grow much slower due to lower light levels and shorter days. It is usually not necessary to prune especially if you are using herbs on a regular basis. Pruning should be done in order to encourage more compact growth. Only the top growth of the plant should be removed at any one time to prevent shock and setting back the plant, as they are slower to respond in the winter months. If you are frequently using herbs, pruning will not be a problem because you'll be pinching the young, new growth, which often has the better flavor.

Insects & Diseases - Overwatering your herbs will cause fungus gnats. If gnats appear, re-pot with fresh potting soil. Herbs can also be bothered by aphids, thrips, whiteflies, and mealy bugs, but they do not pose a serious threat. However, they could provide hosts for infecting other houseplants. Since herbs are a food crop, it is advisable to use an insecticidal soap or other safe, organic methods of pest control such as neem insecticide, according to directions on the label.