

Growing Herbs

Herbs offer a superb variety of shapes, sizes & scents to the garden. Many are ornamental, & most are easy to grow! Incorporate herbs into the vegetable & flower garden, or plant them in a garden all their own.

POPULAR HERBS TO GROW ON THE WEST COAST

The list of herbs below are often grown by gardeners & chefs on the west coast. Most herbs are drought tolerant & require excellent drainage. Many agree that growing herbs on the dry side, without too much fertilizer intensifies the flavour. Almost all herbs prefer full sun, (approximately four hours of direct sunlight each day).

BASIL Adds flavour to your soups & sauces, wonderful in pasta & tomato dishes, vegetable salads, as well as meats & poultry. One of the most widely-used herbs! This annual is cold sensitive & should not be planted outside until late spring. Pinch off flowers to encourage leaf growth. Best used fresh. Grow indoors over the winter in a sunny window.

BAY LEAF Use these large, leathery leaves to flavour soups, stews & meat dishes. Plant in a sheltered area, protected from the wind. It likes full sun & good drainage. Makes a handsome house plant when placed in a large, sunny window.

CHIVES A classic herb & a fine addition to soups, eggs, vegetable dishes & baked potatoes. Plant it close to the kitchen door for handy last minute snippings into salads & sauces. This is the first herb to grow in late winter. The attractive flowers appear in late spring & can be eaten in salads or used for garnish. For a distinct garlic taste try growing Garlic Chives.

CILANTRO/CORIANDER this herb finds its way into a myriad of Asian & Mexican recipes; & has long been a favourite on British & European spice racks. You can grow this Mediterranean native for its leaves, which are known as cilantro, or for its dried seeds, called coriander. It thrives in damp, cool springs & hot, dry summers.

Choose a site that gets full sun & a soil that's well-drained & amended with plenty of compost. Keep a close eye on young plants to make sure they don't dry out, but once established, coriander needs little water. If you are after the leaves, harvest the entire plant when it is about 6" (15cm) high; if it is the seeds you want, wait until the seeds start to ripen, in late summer or early autumn, cut plants off at the base & hang them upside down in paper bags to finish drying.

DILL The leaves & seeds contribute a unique flavour to a variety of foods including pickles, soups, sauces, fish dishes & salad dressing. Soft feathery leaves & umbrella-like clusters of attractive, tiny, yellow flowers which have a pungent fragrance. Plant in a full-sun area. Grows better in spring than summer & usually self-seeds after the first year.

MINT Add it to fruit salad & cooked vegetables, make a mojito on a hot day & don't forget the classic mint sauce for your roast lamb! Easy to grow! Spearmint is the most popular mint used for cooking. Each mint variety has a distinct flavour, aroma, & appearance, a few interesting alternatives are apple, ginger, orange & chocolate mint. Most spread quickly but are easily controlled by planting in a container or curbing their roots with boards.

OREGANO A very versatile herb! Great in pasta sauces, stews, marinades, salad dressings or soup! For cooking, be sure to get the true Greek Oregano. You may come across an oregano grown from seed, but the flavour is inferior by comparison. Golden oregano is much milder than Greek, but more colourful & it makes a wonderful edging! Plant in a warm sunny, well-drained site.

PARSLEY More than just a garnish! Add it to soups, stews, casseroles, egg or cheese dishes. Or chop & sprinkle it on cooked vegetables, meats or pasta. Fresh, green & compact, parsley makes a great edging for general border use. Or grow them in pots so you can bring them indoors for a fresh winter supply. Parsley is a biennial - replant yearly or allow to go to seed.

ROSEMARY This popular herb is used to flavour a wide variety of dishes, including chicken, lamb, pork, potatoes, vegetables or soups! Choose a warm, frost-free area as most varieties will only survive a little frost. Ideally it should be grown against a well-drained, south-facing wall away from strong winds. The variety 'Arp' is quite hardy and can be grown in the garden with little winter protection. Another solution is to grow your Rosemary in a container & bring it into a bright, cool protected place during the winter.



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SAGE A popular flavouring for poultry stuffings, also used sparingly to flavour rich meats and stews. Many people believe you can ward off a sore throat by drinking a cup of sage tea. Easily grown in a sunny border. The soft grey-green leaves are attractive in a border or herb garden. Bees & hummingbirds like the spikes of purple flowers. Prune back to 15 cm in early spring so they stay compact.

TARRAGON Tarragon is a popular culinary herb, most notably in French cuisine. Tarragon is best known for flavouring vinegar. But it is also used to spice up salads, meats, vegetables, sauces, mayonnaise, cheese, & omelettes. It also helps to take the fishy taste out of fish. Plant in well drained soil. It prefers full sun but does well in part shade. Look for the true French tarragon *Artemisia dranunculus* var. *sativa*. The seed-grown Russian tarragon does not have the same intense flavour, or culinary value. Best used fresh or from frozen, just snip off a piece whenever needed. If you want to freeze a lot of tarragon, the best time to harvest it is in July or early August.

THYME With its subtle, dry aroma & slightly minty flavour, thyme is one of the most useful herbs for the kitchen & deserves a place in all gardens. Often included in seasoning blends for poultry, lamb, veal or stuffing. Also used in fish sauces, chowders, soups & blended into spaghetti or pizza sauce, & chili. It is a low-growing, compact, easy-care shrub with attractive pungent foliage with dense clusters of long-lasting flowers. Like other members of the mint family, thyme comes in many flavours & scents. Plant in full sun & well-drained light soil. Suited to the rock garden or the front of a border. Some grow it between paving stones; as it's scent is intensified when trodden on.

Thyme requires very little attention - water only in very dry conditions feeding sparingly. A good mulch with organic matter in October will help protect them from severe frost & will also provide most of their feeding needs.

Clip foliage & flowers any time you need them, although the best flavour is in the months of June & July. The sprigs can be frozen or dried. The more you cut, or even shear back, the more the plants will grow. Cut plants back after they flower in summer to promote bushiness.



HERBS IN CONTAINERS Herbs grow very well in pots & nothing beats a pot full of them just outside your kitchen door! Plant a few of your favourite herbs in a terra-cotta pot. They're guaranteed to look fabulous wherever you place them!

Herbs look wonderful in both traditional or unusual containers! Plant a strawberry pot-full of herbs & take advantage of their rich diversity of foliage & flowers. Create a moss-lined wire-hanging basket stuffed with your favourite flavourings. Do you have a special pot at home? Bring it in & we'll help you start your very own container herb garden.

ANNUAL HERBS The following herbs are annuals, so they must be re-planted each year. Some will seed themselves.

Anise	Basil
Borage	Chervil
Coriander (or Cilantro)	Dill
Florence Fennel	Sweet Marjoram
Summer Savory	

BIENNIAL HERBS These form leaves their first year & then flower and produce seed their second. Then they usually die, although many will re-seed themselves.

Parsley	Caraway
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TENDER HERBS

Tender perennials needs protection from frost in the winter. You can grow them in a sunny window.

Lemon Verbena

SHRUB-LIKE HERBS

These herbs are more like shrubs because they form woody stems at the base:

Bay
Lavender
Rosemary
Sage
Southernwood

PERENNIAL HERBS

The following herbs are perennials. They live from year to year, although some are herbaceous, meaning the foliage withers in the fall.

French Sorrel	French Tarragon
Mint	Oregano
Pennyroyal	Rue
Salvia	Sweet Woodruff
Thyme	Watercress
Welsh Onion	Winter Savory
Wormwood	