



HERBAL

THEME GARDENS



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The Joy of Growing Herbs

I consider herbs to be the most wonderful plants. They have so many uses. Herbs can be used for healing, in cooking, for crafts or just to give pleasure in the garden. How many plants can lay claim to that much variety?

I developed the gardening bug as a result of growing up as a landscaper's daughter. My father's landscaping business in Ladner, B.C. consisted of cutting lawns initially, but he later developed a knack for designing plant and lawn layouts for homes and businesses.

I remember clearly working in the springtime with the young plants, putting the plants into small pots, which would be later transplanted into larger pots as the plants grew bigger. I couldn't understand why the plants were put in small pots if they were just going to be transplanted into larger pots later. Why not put them in the large pots right away and save yourself all that time and effort with replanting?

However, I realize now there was a rhyme and reason to it. There were often huge piles of dirt in our yard, as well as rows of bushes and trees and a

huge assortment of pots.

My poor mother had to live with the yard like this for several years until eventually we moved to new, larger property in the Sumas Valley area of Abbotsford, B.C. There was enough room to have several large piles of dirt, along with the pots, rows of trees, bushes and various gardening implements.

Though my father supplied a large variety of plants for landscaping, there were never any herbs. But that was long before herbs became popular. These days you are more likely to see herbs used in landscaping developments, as well as in people's gardens.

I guess growing up a landscaper's daughter gave me a love for plants, especially when I found a specific type of plant that did everything for me.

Maybe you already have a herb garden or maybe you are just starting out.

In this book I hope to give you some good ideas for herbal theme gardens as well as instructions on proper planting, pruning, harvesting, container gardening and a variety of herbs you can grow, from the well known herbs to ones that are not

as well known but will give your garden something extra.

Why plan and grow a herbal theme garden? Theme gardens are not only fun but give the grower a good sense of how to plan a garden that will give you use and pleasure for years to come.

When you organize your herbs according to a theme, you are more likely to find them easier.

If you want to find some cumin, for instance, you will go straight to the Indian herb garden.

Come with me as I tell you about my herb gardens and the process of evolution from a garden with a mish-mash of plants to a garden with some sense and cohesion.

I hope you will enjoy this book and even refer it to your friends.

Sincerely
Marilyn Zink

My First Herb Garden

Like many people, I didn't really get into gardening until my husband and I bought our first house in Nanaimo. I got quite excited about what I would grow and how it would look.

Our first home was a little rancher but we had a fairly large yard for gardening. However, because the lawn was well established, there was a fair amount of digging involved to break up the sod before I could get started with my herb garden. I should amend this to say it was a herb and flower garden, as flowers can certainly add to a herb garden.

When I started the garden, I didn't want a square box shape that is often used to plant vegetable gardens. Herbs lend themselves to gardens with interesting shapes and more flow to them. So I decided to plan a garden with a crescent shape.

It was planned near the front of the yard in full sun. Since most herbs enjoy full sun, this was a good location.

I didn't really have a concise plan of where to put plants, but I knew which plants I liked. They were your typical culinary herbs, which also have a lot of other uses. I planted

oregano, rosemary, thyme, marjoram and sage to start. These were planted near the front since they are not tall herbs. At the back I planted Echinacea, fennel and wormwood. I don't remember why I chose wormwood, maybe I just liked the name or the look of it. Then I added some Shasta daisies and Black-Eyed Susans for the middle as well as some lavender. I later added some mint at the sides and creeping thyme at the very front. I think some garlic found it's way in there too. I added some yarrow as well.

“I loved the scent of the herbs as my hand brushed against them.”

By now, the garden was getting a little crowded. I made some attempts to enlarge the garden by digging up the lawn again but it was hard work and not a lot of fun. So that's about as far as it went for the plants in my first garden.

I loved that little garden, however. I loved the look of the flowers and the herbs as they came into flower. Echinacea has the most beautiful large pink flowers, which was a nice comparison to the white of the

Shasta daisies. When the sage and lavender came into flower with their purple spikes and the yarrow had its pink flowers, it was an enjoyable sight to see.

On a hot summer day, with the bees buzzing lazily from flower to flower or a butterfly landing inches away, the herbs and flowers gave me great pleasure.

I spent a lot of time in my herb garden, deadheading flowers, pulling weeds, adding a plant or digging something up and pruning in the late summer.

I loved the scent of the herbs as my hand brushed against them. I loved pruning the branches and then taking them inside the house, bunching them together with an elastic band and drying them in a cool dark place so I could use the dried herbs in the winter.

I enjoyed rubbing the dry, crispy leaves off the branches and storing them in glass containers so they were handy to use when I was cooking.

By now, I was thoroughly hooked on growing herbs. Before long, we were planning a family and decided to move to a larger house.

My Second Herb Garden

Our new house had a blank piece of property, with nothing growing on it. We moved in at the end of October and I was expecting our son in late February. So I had the winter to plan and think about the garden. I had transplanted some herbs and flowers from the old property so I had the basics of a herb garden.

The house had been built on a slope so there was a steep driveway leading down to the garage. The slope continued to the back yard where it leveled out a bit. This layout made me determine how I would plan my garden. At first I wasn't sure how I would design the garden or where I would put the plants.

But I knew I wanted some sort of path. So I started the garden next to the garage with a slightly winding path. This part of the garden wasn't particularly wide, perhaps five to six feet across.

As the path came to the bottom near the back yard, I wasn't sure what to do with it. Here I wanted the garden to be much wider and also leave room for a vegetable garden. Then an idea came to me. I would end it in a large teardrop. That gave me room to walk around all

areas of the garden and have access to the plants from the path. I had picked up a birdbath at a gardening store and decided to put this in the middle of the teardrop. Adding elements to your garden such as a birdbath or a gazing ball gives it an extra cachet.

While I was planning, the baby was getting ready to come. Our son Marcus was born on Feb. 23. The new baby kept me busy for several months. But spring was now here and I was on maternity leave, so I was ready to get planting.

Before I continue, I should mention that I am giving you the condensed version of planting my herb garden. While I had great ambition and plans for my herb garden as well as a vegetable garden and general landscaping of our property, things took a lot of time. Funny how a little baby can keep you so busy.

So keep in mind the evolution of my herb garden took several years. The same may or may not be true for you, depending on the time and energy you decide to put into it and the size of your garden. It can be as simple or as expansive as you want it to be.

Back to my herb garden

and plans for planting. I had a fair amount of room to plan the herbs I wanted to grow.

Near the top at the start of the garden I decided to put culinary herbs. These plants would be closer to my kitchen and easier to access when I wanted to snip something for a meal.

So I planted the oregano, rosemary, thyme, sage and marjoram I had transplanted in pots from the former property. I also added some garlic and chives as well as lovage, peppermint and basil when it was hot enough. These were planted in full sun and grew enthusiastically.

Also near the top of the garden I had a separate section where I planted a wildflower garden. This was visible from my parking area and gave me great pleasure whenever I came home from work or an outing.

Continued next page

“So keep in mind the evolution of my herb garden took several years.”

“This was a stunning plant with bright red flowers that made it the centerpiece of the garden.”

Farther down the garden I planted some valerian, hyssop, lemon balm, wooly lambs ears and wormwood. The wormwood eventually grew as tall as I am, which is 5 ‘8.” You can see an old picture of me standing next to the wormwood on my website at [www. http://www.herbalcollective.ca/Marilyn.html](http://www.herbalcollective.ca/Marilyn.html).

The garden had some large rocks in it, which had been left when the land was cleared. I didn’t try to remove these rocks, simply planted around it.

Besides, they gave the garden an extra visual appeal. Creeping thyme is one herb that lends itself well to growing around and often over rocks. This plant doesn’t mind if you step on it either.

Near the bottom of my garden, against the neighbors fence, I planted some dill, Echinacea, fennel, borage, lemon thyme, chamomile, yarrow, parsley and bergamot.

These plants were on one side of the large teardrop path I had planned and lined with gravel. Inside the teardrop I rimmed the edges with lavender

plants. Just in front of the bird-bath in the middle of the teardrop I planted cardinal sage. This was a stunning plant with bright red flowers that made it the centerpiece of the garden.

On the opposite side of the teardrop I planted my vegetable garden. Near the back of the teardrop I decided to plant some sweet woodruff, since the area could be a bit shady at times and that herb prefers shade. I also planted some Sweet Angelica and Lady’s Mantle.

I now had about 50 herbs as well as a variety of flowers and vegetables in season. The bees and butterflies were attracted to everything that flowers, and particularly loved the cardinal sage, borage, lavender and bergamot.

All of these herbs had beautiful flowers as well as a nice scent. Later on I will tell you a theme garden you can plant to attract bees and butterflies.

My garden required a fair amount of attention to weed and prune plants when it was needed. It was a going concern. So was my young son, who by now was about three or four

years old. I didn’t always weed as well as I should have and sometimes the path became overgrown or the herbs became choked with weeds. I had to spend more time doing ‘grunt work’ then I wanted. But I still loved my garden.

Though it sounds like it was a lot of work to look after, that was not always true. The garden was well established by now. The only intense periods were spring and fall, when pruning and weeding needed to be done. Of course, it wasn’t just limited to this garden. The rest of the yard needed attention too.

My garden gave me great pleasure for many years. I planted, pruned, dried herbs, cooked with herbs and made herbal vinegars. I think I might have even tried to make a herbal wreath at one point but gave up because I wasn’t sure how to do it.

After more than 10 years of living in that home, it was time to move on again. Our son was by now 12 years old. Once again we started with a new house and a blank piece of property.

My Third Herb Garden

A Theme is Developing

When we moved into our third house, our second brand new house, I knew I wanted to do things differently.

The house had to be finished inside and out (the previous new home had an unfinished basement). The yard had to be properly developed. Done improperly, these things took time and energy away from what I really wanted to do, which was to enjoy planning and growing my garden.

After we moved in and got settled in early April 2005, the next focus was the yard. We decided to hire a landscaper to get the 'grunt' work done. The back yard needed fill while the front yard had a slope, which needed a good design. While the landscaper was going about his business, I was planning my herb garden.

I knew I wanted another large garden but one that wouldn't require as much work. I learned from the previous garden that a good foundation makes all the difference. By that, I mean a garden that has the proper structure and the right kind of soil to grow plants. I planned the garden to run

along one side of our yard next to the neighbor's fence. A large tree was in the yard, about 15 feet away from the fence and a third of the way into the yard. The garden's border went from the fence in a curving line around the tree and back to the fence.

I had spent some time following the trajectory of the sun so I knew which areas of the garden would get the most light and which wouldn't. That is one of the tricks to planning a garden, to know how much sun the garden will get and to plant accordingly.

Since most herbs like full sun, I knew the garden would get morning light and light well into the afternoon. By late afternoon the light would fade, however by this point most of the garden had been exposed to eight or more hours of sun.

So I now had a large chunk of soil for my potential garden. What next? I decided to construct pathways through the garden, like I did with my previous garden. I decided to have five distinct areas, which would form the basis of my theme gardens. I may add a sixth area as one section is quite large, though I will decide that

in the future.

I divided these sections into the following areas; a culinary garden, a flowering scented herb garden, a medicinal garden, a fairy garden and a long narrow strip that may be used for flowers for subdivided into separate themes.

It wasn't until fall that I could plant some herbs, so I mostly chose culinary herbs; rosemary, thyme, chives, oregano, parsley and sage.

The following spring I planted a few more herbs; lavender, hollyhock, Echinacea and some flowers. As we were in the process of adopting a young girl from Nepal, I didn't have as much time to pay attention to my garden. I left in the middle of July 2006 to pick her up and when we returned, most of my attention was given to her, so the garden didn't always get the attention it needed. However, my new daughter Basanti Maia loved watering the plants and helping to pull weeds.

One day in late summer I discovered to my chagrin that the flowers were disappearing at a rapid rate. What was happening? One day I was watching the flowers developing on my

A Theme is Developing, *continued from page 8*

hollyhock and looking forward to seeing it in full bloom. Several days later the flowers as well as leaves had been stripped from the plant. It was down to three leafless twigs! That's when I noticed several little footprints in the soil. Deer! No wonder the plants weren't growing the way I expected. I even saw the deer in the bushes on one occasion. Before I could go any further with my garden, the deer had to be prevented from eating the tender shoots of my plants. It wasn't until late fall that a fence was installed in the back yard. Further planting had to be put on hold until spring.

You can read more about deer and deer resistant herbs in a later chapter in this book.

With gardening season over and winter coming, I thought over my plans for the herb garden.

Winter is a great time to plan for spring. After you go through this book, you will have some idea of the herbs you would like to grow and plan where to put them.

In the next section, I will talk about planning your garden, as I feel that a good foundation is so important to having a healthy garden. It will also save you a lot of grief, time and effort and money down the road.

Several homeowners in our

neighborhood have had to rip out their lawns and start over with new lawns and gardens as the builder (who put in the lawns) didn't bother to make sure there was a good foundation for the yard.

This is what is known as a Spec house. It is a house with a yard done to sell quickly.

I watched this done at our next door neighbour's. I couldn't believe what they were doing.

They simply raked the rocks off the bare dirt and put the sod directly on top of it.

No topsoil, nothing else done to prepare it.

'That won't last long,' I said to my husband.

Sure enough, by the following year the lawn was patchy with weeds.

The back yard was worse. The people the builder had hired to do the work (I refuse to call them landscapers) had simply raked the area, threw down a bit of dirt and seeded and watered.

Our neighbour decided to sell so she hired a landscaper to do the front yard properly.

In the meantime the seeds from the weeds had now blown into our front yard and had started growing (despite my best attempts to yank them out).

The back yard was left untouched.

The new neighbour moved in. He now has a messy, weedy,

unsightly, bumpy back yard to deal with.

As the entire neighborhood is built on a hillside, his backyard is severely sloped.

Ours had been levelled by our builder, though we had to have lots of fill brought in.

I mention all this to indicate the importance of proper foundation when gardening.

Plants don't grow well in lousy dirt. They just don't. Though herbs are more forgiving than most plants.

Initially it takes some work to get the yard properly established. But you have to do it otherwise you will pay for it later. Don't take the shortcuts or you'll be sorry later.

You'll be spending more time digging out weeds than you want to. Or maybe you'll be throwing out rocks whenever you dig a hole for a new plant.

Trust me, I've been there and learned my lesson.

'He now has a messy, weedy, unsightly bumpy back yard to deal with.'



Good planning is essential to give you a garden structure that will last for years to come. Here, I have started a wall with some simple bricks.

Planning the Garden

A good garden starts with several factors; the size of land you want for the garden, the type of soil you are dealing with, the amount of sunshine the property gets and the layout you would like.

Herbs are fairly easy plants to grow. They don't require hours of fussing, or special soils and are fairly resistant to pests and diseases. However, as with most plants, giving them the proper amount of care will produce a healthier plant.

You don't need a lot of space either, as a surprisingly large amount of plants can be grown in a small space. Starting small is often better until you are sure of what you want.

Sunshine

This is one of the first things to consider. You need to consider the trajectory of the sun, which parts of the garden will get the most sun and which parts will get the most shade, if any. Since most herbs like full sun, it is best to consider a garden that will provide that. Of

course, you can still grow these herbs in a garden that will have sun and shade, as long as the herbs get sun for seven hours a day. There are a few herbs such as **Sweet Woodruff**, which can be grown in shade, though they will still need some sun. I spend a fair amount of time considering the sun's path before laying out a herb garden (or any garden, for that matter).

Soil

I had to deal with a lot of clay with my first herb garden. It was sticky when wet and hard as a brick on hot summer days. Soil can be improved in several ways. Humus will make the soil richer, lime will build up the calcium content and is a good treatment for acid soils, while liquid fertilizer acts as food for the plants. Here on the West Coast of British Columbia, or as I jokingly call it, the Wet Coast, the high amounts of rain can make the soil too acidic.

A compost bin is a good way to add humus to the soil. I had a compost bin in the far corner of the backyard, and

often used the humus from it to improve the texture of the soil. Humus is the decomposed mixture of organic substances. Our compost was a black plastic cone-shape that I picked up from an environmental business. It had a lid on top and a little door near the bottom, where material could be taken from. The compost consisted of grass clippings and leftover vegetables and fruit trimmings from my kitchen. Tea bags, coffee grounds and egg shells were also added. Whenever I dug up or trimmed something from the herb garden, this too was added to the compost bin. I grew Comfrey in my second herb garden and it is one of the best herbs to help break down compost more quickly.

Never add any meat waste to the compost, particularly as this will attract rats. Diseased plants or anything with weed killer in it should not be added to the compost. However, since I didn't believe in spraying our yard, that was not a concern. Branch trimmings from hedges or trees should also not be

added as it will take too long to break down the compost. Flatten the compost every now and then and add dirt occasionally to layer between the grass clippings and other refuse. You can buy a compost accelerator to help speed up the process. If you have a lot of material to add, you might want to have two composts going and then you will always have such some rich humus to add to your soil.

Manure is also worthwhile to make the soil richer. Well-rotted animal manure is often added in the fall. I would dig up soil from the garden and mix some of the manure in a wheelbarrow before replacing it. I did this five or six times, filling up the wheelbarrow each time, raking through the soil and throwing out any large rocks or chunks of wood.

My garden always seemed to have a fair amount of rocks left over from the process of building a house. This was my second herb garden, where we had purchased a home with bare land. I discovered other things the landscapers had left behind in the soil as well. There were pieces of dry wall, garbage from someone's lunch purchased from a fast food restaurant, nails, rebar, an empty pop bottle, you name it, I was discovering it buried in the yard.

While mixing up soils in the wheelbarrow, the other element I might add was sand.

Sand helps break up the soil and improves the drainage.

Digging up the soil to add manure and compost was a lot of work. You might just want to hire a landscaper to do the job for you. Of course, you'll have to pay more and you will lose the satisfaction of doing it yourself and knowing exactly what is going into your soil.

I hired a landscaper for our third house and was disappointed with the quality of the soil for my herb garden. The soil didn't have any nutrients so the plants didn't grow very well. Fortunately, herbs are very forgiving and some of them grew, regardless. But in the springtime I'll be back to digging up dirt and adding humus. I'm tempted to just take out all the dirt and start over.

You might want to consider mulching to keep the weeds down and also as protection from frost. Bark mulch is the most popular one to use and it doesn't wash away in the rain. It'll make the garden easier to weed, so you spend less time on unpleasant tasks and more time with your herbs.

Feeding and Watering

When the herbs were growing, I would occasionally add liquid fertilizer. One of my favorites was Miracle Grow. A teaspoon was diluted in a water-

ing can and I would go through my garden, watering the herbs with it. If a particular herb looked like it needed something more, I would give it extra as well as dig in some compost and well-rotted manure around the base. But don't feed your herbs too much, it can affect the flavour of the herbs.

How often to water herbs is another important aspect to consider. Since most herbs are from Mediterranean background (rosemary, basil,) they don't need a lot of water or frequent watering. But they do benefit from the occasional deep watering.

Herbal Fertilizers

It might surprise most people to know that you can make your own herbal fertilizer. I grew a large comfrey plant in my second herb garden and regularly used it as a fertilizer. I did this by tearing off the leaves as needed and soaking them. You can make your own fertilizer by pouring four cups of boiling water over a large handful of fresh herbs or two tablespoons dried herbs. Strain it through cheesecloth before using.

Comfrey supplies plants with three fertilizing ingredients – nitrogen, phosphorous and abundant potash, as well as several trace elements and minerals.

You can grow some other herbs to use as fertilizers. Coltsfoot contains sulfur and potassium, Dill is rich in minerals, potassium, sulfur and sodium, Nettle is rich in iron, nitrogen and several minerals and trace elements while Yarrow provides copper and is a good general fertilizer.*

However, I still prefer comfrey because it grows quite large and its leaves are easy to use. It's harder to use herbs like yarrow, with its pretty pink and white flowers or dill, which I prefer to dry for my fish.

Designing the Garden

This is the most enjoyable aspect of planning a garden, next to actually putting the plants in the ground. The garden design will depend on what format you like, the kind of space you have to work with and how much time and effort you want to spend on your garden.

Some people like formal herb gardens based on well-defined patterns, while others like more informal gardens with rounded flowing shapes. Or you might want a combination of both.

My first garden was a crescent shape, half a circle. That was it. Nothing special for a garden design, but I was still

able to grow 14 plants in that space. The second garden had a meandering path with plants on both sides, which led to a large tear-drop shape with a birdbath in the middle. The third garden had five distinct sections with four paths.

Draw the Plan

I always found it helpful to draw out the plan for the garden and determine where you want to put your plants. This is what I did with the second garden and my current garden.

You might wish to draw out several designs or look at designs in garden books. When the design feels right, you will know.

I remember looking at our yard when I was planning my second herb garden. I just wasn't sure what to do with the space at the bottom. I didn't want anything square, I knew that much. But then I saw a garden with the teardrop shape and said, "that's it!"

"That's the one I'm going to use." I just knew, there was no need to look any further.

Here are some ideas. Rather than lay out your garden in rows (as we often do with vegetable gardens), consider something a little more interesting.

If you like geometric shapes, you might plan raised beds perhaps in the shape of

triangles or diamonds. Or maybe you want to plan a square within a square. The inner square would contain one type of garden enhanced perhaps with a birdbath or sculpture in the centre. Around it is a path leaving you with four gardens in the outer square. Or perhaps you might wish to do a series of diagonal paths with separate gardens in-between.

If you like a more rounded garden, consider a series of interlocking circles, or maybe a large semi-circular pathway perhaps ending in a private space with an arbor or bench.

The path could have interesting herbs or garden elements as you walk around the bend.

Or maybe you could make a small maze or even a labyrinth. These are popular and provide a meditative place to escape from life's pressures. You might plan a series of geometric shapes and circles. A garden mapped out in stars or moon shapes, or one designed as a constellation could be particularly interesting and one to consider if you wish to plant a moonlight garden.

There are so many possibilities; only you can decide which one is best based on what you like and the property you have to work with. Garden elements can also play a distinctive role in planning a garden as you will see in the next chapter.

Preventing Deer with Herbs

Many gardeners have been reduced to tears when they've discovered a beloved plant has been shredded by marauding deer. Short of shooting Bambi, (and we already know how that story goes), there are ways to deal with those crafty deer.

Deer like to nibble tasty young shoots and flowers. If you have these in your garden and deer in your neighborhood, chances are the deer will eat them.

But I have found that generally the more aromatic the plant, the more likely that deer will leave them alone. So most herbs are deer resistant. Good news for herb growers.

That said, the list of deer resistant plants varies from place to place and even year to year, so it depends on where you live and the type of environment the deer have in that area.

It brings to mind the commercial where the two female deer are watching a fellow eat a snack and the one deer says to the other, 'I am so done with leaves.'

We wish. That would make our hobby as gardeners more enjoyable.

Deer tend to avoid herbs like; rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme. They will also leave some daisies alone as well as

scented geranium, citronella and *Pelargonium citrosum* as well as Chaste tree or *Vitex*.

Following are some more deer resistant herbs and flowers. The first name is the common name and the second name is the botanical name.

Yarrow / *Achillea*
 Bee Balm / *Monarda*
 Catmint / *Nepeta*
 (Lamiaceae)
 Columbine / *Aquilegia*
 Purple Coneflower /
Echinacea purpurea
 (Compositae)
 Cornflower, Dusty Miller
 + / *Centaurea* (Compositae)
 Coreopsis / *C. lanceolate*,
verticillata + (Compositae)
 False Spiraea / *Astilbe* vs
 Foxglove / *Digitalis*
 Golden Daisy Shrub /
Euryops (Compositae)
 Globe Thistle / *Echinops*
 (Compositae)
 Gloriosa Daisy & Black-
 eyed Susan / *Rudbeckia hirta*
 (Compositae)
 Lady's Mantle / *Alchemilla*
mollis
 Lamb's Ears / *Stachys*
byzantina (Lamiaceae)
 Lavender / *Lavandula*
angustifolia, *stoechas* & others
 (Lamiaceae)
 Lupine / *Lupinus*
 Oregano & Marjoram /
Origanum vs
 Poppy / *Papaver* vs

Peony / *Paeonia*
 Rosemary / *Rosmarinus*
officinalis (Lamiaceae)

Sage / *Salvia* vs
 (Lamiaceae)

Thyme / *Thymus* vs
 (Lamiaceae)

Valerian / *Centranthus*
Ruber

Ground Covers & Vines

Jasmine / *Jasminum*
 St John's Wort / *Hypericum*
 Sweet Woodruff / *Galium*
odoratum

Annuals

Blue Felicia / *Felicia*
ameloides
 Calendula
 California Poppy /
Eschscholzia californica
 Cosmos
 Geranium / *Pelargonium*
Godetia
 Impatiens / *Balsam*

Some of my research on deer resistant plants has suggested planting a living fence of deer resistant plants. Well, I'm not sure you want to grow that much rosemary. Besides, do you really think that would stop the deer if they saw something interesting to munch?

That being said, the best defence against deer is a fence, preferably one that is 8-10 feet high. Then you can plant whatever you want.

Elements to Make Gardens More Interesting

Elements of some type have been used in gardens for hundreds of years. Grecian gardens with sculptures of gods such as Venus and Zeus come to mind. Monastic gardens during medieval times often enclosed herb gardens with walls and used elements such as sundials and benches.

Gazing balls are popular nowadays along with birdbaths, sundials, statues, weathervanes and fountains. A place to sit definitely makes a garden more enticing, particularly if there is an outdoor fireplace to keep warm. The popular chimena from the Spanish culture is a small enclosed portable chimney with an opening for adding coals.

The use of fences or wall, arches, pergolas and gazebos also provide private spaces in a garden. You might also wish to consider lighting and the use of water.

Lighting

Lighting is extremely popular with gardens, particularly the use of solar lights or globe lights, which are sometimes part of statues. A simple albeit temporary way to add light to the garden is with candles. A luminary (which can

mean an important person or in this case, an object that gives light), is easy to make from old coffee cans or paper bags. Stencil or draw a design, cut it out, paint as needed, then fill the object with a small amount of sand and place a tealight in the middle. Another inexpensive light source, if you are planning an Asian theme garden (or even if you aren't) is the use of Chinese lanterns.

Chinese lanterns are usually collapsible and made of bright coloured paper.

The Lantern Festival (Yuan Xiao Festival in Chinese – 'Yuan' means 'first' and 'xiao' means 'night') happens on the 15th day of the Chinese New Year. Chinese months relate to the lunar calendar so that each month starts on the darkest day. The moon is therefore at its brightest on the 15th day. Lanterns are painted with flowers, animals, zodiac signs or legendary scenes, then hung up and carried to an evening parade in the light of the full moon.

Water

The use of water as an element in the garden is another extremely popular trend, particularly concerning fountains. Bird baths are also quite popular, particularly when you can watch the birds actually using

the bath. I have an old cement bird bath that serves as a focal point in my herb garden. It is chipped and corroded in places but I love it and it looks well with my herbs.

The use of moving water with fountains and ponds makes a herb garden more enticing. You could use a fountain that you just turn on occasionally, but the effect will still make your garden more entrancing. I'm planning to use a fountain in my herb garden, I just haven't decided yet where to put it. The use of water in your garden is an important aspect of Feng Shui. For more on water and how to use it effectively in your garden, see the next chapter on Feng Shui.

'The use of moving water with fountains and ponds makes a herb garden more enticing.'

Feng Shui in the Garden

When planning a garden, it is useful to consider the principles of Feng Shui.

Feng shui is about organizing our environment in a way that brings harmony and increases good energy or chi. So it's all about energy and how it enhances and detracts from your life.

Those who practice Feng Shui believe that the chi or vital energy runs through the earth in a way that can influence the fortunes of individuals and their descendents. As topography is adjusted when a garden is planned, the use of feng shui can have a significant influence on how that garden is designed. For instance, old trees are considered good sources of chi.

Many of the Feng Shui theories takes their cues from nature, following the principles of God's original floor plan for our world.

When you read the information here, don't worry if you can't adhere strictly to the rules of Feng Shui. Simply begin with the areas of the garden that you want to deal with first. Small things like a water fountain or wind chime placed correctly can

cause good Feng Shui or bring good Chi into your garden.

Even following a few of the principles, such as reducing clutter, striving for balancing and trusting your intuition can increase the Feng Shui. It's all about curves and proportion, utilizing light, space, color and patterns.

When I planned my gardens, I didn't know I was following some principles of Feng Shui, such as curves, proportion and balance. I just knew what I liked and what made me feel good.

'Feng shui is an ancient oriental term that means the way of wind (feng) and water (shui). So water is an important element to use in a garden. Water has always been associated with power. King and emperors have used it for thousands of years to protect themselves by using moats. Most cities today are either near the water or have large lakes or rivers close by.

Ocean-front and lakeside homes are always the most popular and expensive. Water is a key element, we can't exist without it and our bodies are mainly water. Using water in the garden is good Feng Shui and a powerful way to increase energy

in your life.

Water refreshes the Chi and soothes the nerves. Water should always be clear and free flowing, never let it stagnate as this will create many problems. A fountain or simple fishpond in the garden is ideal. Pools of water that empty into each other are very good.

When I was growing up in Ladner, B.C., my landscaper father designed two ponds in our backyard, with a little waterfall from one pond emptying into the other. We also had Japanese Koi, a kind of goldfish, swimming in the ponds. I loved sitting on the bench next to the ponds and looking at the Koi. I doubt my father knew he was practicing good Feng Shui.

'Many of the Feng Shui theories take their cues from nature, following the principles of God's original floor plan for our world.'

The Chinese believe that placing a water fountain in strategic areas of your home and garden can bring abundance and wealth into your life. A water fountain placed in your workplace can affect your career

in a positive way.

The Chinese believe in the five elements; wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Of these, water is the element most associated with wealth. A tabletop Zen garden can be a miniature feng shui garden you can bring into your workplace. Decorative indoor fountains can have a soothing effect and also deflect negative Chi from co-workers or the environment.

Aquariums are another way to bring water into your workplace. Putting goldfish in your garden pond and having a goldfish bowl in your home will encourage wealth.

The Meaning of the Five Elements

Knowing the five elements can help when planning your garden and using Feng Shui. The different elements can be used as remedies to correct imbalances in your garden. The Chinese believe in balancing Yin and Yang and this can also be considered for your garden. Yin represents dark, slow, quiet and calm. Yang is bright, loud, fast and energetic.

It's important to incorporate the five elements into your garden, such as a pond for

water, a bronze statue for metal, shrubs for wood, red and orange for fire and soil or boulders for earth.

Water

As mentioned, water gives life to our planet. Flowing water is the best. Metal fountains are okayed but ceramic or other earthen fountains are not considered good to use as the earth element blocks water and neutralizes its positive effect. A metal trough, a fountain or even a fish pond can act as an environmental solution.

Wood

Wood is considered the beginning of new life. Just as spring brings new plants new life, wood is the originator of the five elemental cycle. Plants recycle the air we breathe and can provide a natural filter for the air. A dead plant holds no Chi and is actually a 'Sha' (unsightly or bad influence). A shrub or bushy plant sends and retains Chi.

Wood represents the directions of East and South East.

Earth

The earth element is quite obviously represented by soil, a mountain, large granite boul-

ders, terra cotta pots filled with potting soil and beautiful clay statues.

Earth is represented by the North East and the South West.

Metal

Metal is a common solution or remedy that can be found in all forms. Copper, silver, gold and bronze are a few variations of the metal element. Using the metal element can encourage all sorts of creative ideas. Remember that Feng Shui is about creating a beautiful environment. So metal elements in the garden should be rounded, not sharp and pointy. Metal is a common remedy used to balance or correct negative Earth energies.

Metal elements such as statues or benches should blend into the environment and enhance the beauty of the garden.

Metal represents the West.

Fire

The fire element is the most 'Yang' of all the elements. It is a hot summer day, a blast of heat and colorful plants. Red plants or plants with red flowers make excellent Fire remedies which can be used to correct dark areas. Fire represents the South.

Using the Bagua

According to the teachings of Feng Shui, a 'Bagua' is used with nine zones to help plan our homes, buildings and gardens. Each place or habitat in which we live, work or play holds energies that affect our lives. Nine Bagua zones divide the garden. The perfect Feng Shui garden includes one section devoted to each of the Bagua for balance.

What is the Bagua? According to the Black Hat Sect Tantric Buddhism, it's a kind of map in the shape of an octagon divided into different areas representing fame, wealth, family, knowledge or spirituality, career, relationships, children/creativity and helpful people/travel.

The Bagua, an eight-sided trigram, is taken from the I Ching, the ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes the yin-yang principles, which is believed to govern all universal laws.*

If you compared the Bagua to a clock, then the fame zone is located in the middle of the top

section or high noon. Going clockwise, the relationship/marriage zone is located between 1 and 2 p.m, the children/creativity zone is located at 3 p.m., the helpful people/travel zone is located at 4 p.m., the Career zone is located at 6 p.m., the knowledge/spirituality zone is located between 7 and 8 p.m., the family zone is located at 9 p.m. and the wealth zone is located between 10 and 11 p.m.

The fame zone represents the element fire and the colors red and orange, the relationship/marriage zone represents the element earth and the colors red, pink and white, the children zone represents soft metal and the colors white and gold, the helpful people/travel zone represents hard metal and the colors white and gold, the career zone is represented by water and the colors black and blue, the knowledge zone is represented by earth and the colors green, tan and yellow, the family zone is represented by hard wood and the colors dark green and aquamarine and the wealth zone is represented by soft wood and the color green, purple and red.

The Meaning of Plants

Plants are assigned to the five Feng Shui elements depending on their energy and content. Woody plants are for modification and movement. Fire plants such as the red flowers of the cardinal sage are for beauty and humor. Earth plants such as Clematis embody stability and peace. Metal plants such as Pampasgrass donate strength and resilience. Aquatic plants such as summer aster are for strong will and seriousness.

Another good way to bring Feng Shui into your garden is with scent. This is where the Fragrance theme garden comes in handy. Plant as many scented flowers as you can, such as roses, lavender, geraniums, bergamot and others. The garden is all about life and encouraging life into your garden. Scented gardens will encourage more birds, bees and dragonflies. Introduce movement and sound with wind chimes.

'Scented gardens will encourage more birds, bees and dragonflies.'

Feng Shui Principles to Consider

Reducing Clutter

Getting rid of clutter and keeping a clean environment in our homes and gardens is so important. Clutter reduces and blocks the flow of Chi.

In your garden it is important to do a regular clean-up. Sweep up leaves, clean up fallen branches, pull weeds, fix broken lawn furniture. Put hoses and lawn sprinklers in their proper places. Hide dustbins, sweep patios or walkways and check for broken sections.

I have a hard time with some of these things myself. After a long winter, give your garden a thorough inspection and clean up the clutter before you get gardening in earnest. In the fall, prepare the garden for winter doing a similar clean-up.

Like Attracts Like

Another important principle to consider is that who you are is what you will draw to you. The chi in our bodies is shaped by the energy patterns in our environment. This is why you must make sure your environment reflects what you want to pull in. So does your garden reflect who you are? Perhaps you have a partner who thinks a garden must only be a straight, angular shape and grow only food. Then let him have his own garden and you can have yours.

I have a daughter who wants to grow strawberries and all sorts of other plants. I'm giving her a patch of ground for her own garden so what she wants doesn't interfere with my plans for my garden.

'The Chi in our bodies is shaped by the energy patterns in our environment.'



'Herb garden from our third home.'



Containers are a great way to grow many herbs. We grow herbs in containers for many reasons.

There are as many types of containers as there are herbs.

Whether you use an old boot or a fancy container purchased from a local garden shop, you are sure to be rewarded when you grow herbs in containers.

Here, Cilantro grows happily in a appropriate Mexican themed container.

Sometimes you want to grow a garden but just don't have much space. This is where containers come in handy. You may wish to grow some herbs in containers even if you do have space. This works for several reasons.

Some herbs are sensitive to climate and need to be taken in during the winter. Another reason is that you might have a sundeck or patio where you want to grow herbs in addition to your garden. I do this and

find it works well with certain culinary herbs. This way the herbs are close to my kitchen door. So when I want a few, I simply head out to my mini herb garden and snip what I want. If I want more herbs, then I head down to my garden and snip some more plants.

Containers are good for annual herbs like basil, which likes hot weather and will happily grow on a sheltered sunny sundeck.

You might also want to use

containers to keep invasive herbs like mint and lemon balm from running amok through your garden, popping up in all sorts of unexpected places.

I also like growing herbs in containers as a temporary measure. I'm sometimes not sure where I want to plant them permanently, so I will keep them in a pot until I decide.

Either way, most herbs grow beautifully in containers.

You can still plan an herbal theme garden with containers.

There are a variety of ways you can accomplish your own private space with aromatic herbs.

Make the best use of your space by planting on walls, using hanging baskets, using planter boxes on the balcony railing itself as well as the floor. Think in three dimensions to provide yourself with the most greenery as well as flowers

Types of Containers

There are many kinds of containers to use from nowadays and though plastic is the most inexpensive (as well as the lightest), it doesn't make the best container for herbs. Plastic containers don't evaporate water as well as other containers so the soil stays wet longer, which can prove a problem when its rainy as herbs prefer well-drained soil.

Terra cotta containers, (fired clay) are often a favourite choice. The rich red color looks good with herbs and they evaporate water quickly, keeping the soil well-drained. Though the terra cotta can be a concern during hot dry weather. It's a good idea to soak new clay pots in water for 24 hours before use.

Strawberry pots are often a favourite choice to grow a variety of herbs. Choose a larger size so the plants have more room to grow. Plant the pot with smaller herbs such as culinary

favourites like parsley or chives. Large herbs like fennel and dill soon run out of room.

My strawberry pot is about 15 inches high and sits on my sundeck. I grew strawberries in it until last summer, but now I think I will grow culinary herbs, so they are a few short steps away. You could grow three or four different herbs in a strawberry pot, but I would not use mint as it soon becomes pot-bound and will choke out the other herbs.

Another container type to consider is painted wood, though if you want to move it later in the year, you will have to consider how heavy it will be. A square wood container about two to two and a half feet high is ideal for growing the larger herbs like dill and Echinacea. A bay tree will also look lovely but it will need winter protection.

Half barrels are popular containers and herbs will grow well in them and look good too.

Ceramic pots look good with herbs however you will probably want to bring these indoors during the winter as the freezing/thawing cycle can make them crack.

Hanging baskets are a wonderful way to grow herbs in small spaces. You can get the wire baskets lined with sphagnum moss or the coconut fiber

baskets. Some herbs to consider for hanging are the creeping thymes, mints such as peppermint or spearmint, creeping rosemary and trailing lavender. Compact varieties for the centre of the basket are dwarf sage, bush basil and English thyme.

You could be creative and grow herbs in other containers, like a pair of old boots, for instance. My sister in Northern B.C. has six boys (yes, you read that right), so she has plenty of old boots to choose from. Herbs look nice against the ruggedness of the old boots. This way she gets to grow her plants without having to spend money on expensive containers.

Soils to Consider

The soil you plant in a container garden is different from the soil you would use in your garden. It's also a good idea to line the bottom of the pot with a layer of gravel or broken pottery to prevent the pot from getting waterlogged.

You will want a soil that's part loam, peat, well-rotted compost and a small amount of horticultural sand. Ideally, the soil should be good at retaining water and allow for drainage. One way to increase the soil's ability to hold moisture is surfactants. Surfactants are useful for making the top layer of potting soil wet, as this layer

can become quite dry during summer months. Surfactants are great for hanging baskets and can increase the time between waterings. Dishpan detergents are surfactants but these are not tested for their safety on plants – look for horticultural grade surfactants at your local gardening store.

Container Theme Gardens

When planning a theme garden with containers, consider the location you will be using. Is it a balcony, a large windowsill, a patio or a porch? If you have room, it's always nice to plan the garden around a seating arrangement. Perhaps you might wish to use a bench, a swinging couch or an inviting bistro table with a couple of chairs that welcomes a friend for coffee or tea.

Coffee with a Girlfriend – Plan your container garden around a bistro table and chairs. Arrange herbs on an elevated stand to show off the plants at different heights. Is it a shady area with a bit of sun? Consider herbs and flowers too that like some shade. Perhaps some mint, parsley, salad burnet, primrose, wild strawberries, Meadowsweet with its yellow flowers, Sweet Cicely and Catmint with its pretty purple

flowers. If you have a cat, provide a little bed near the catmint, as he will surely enjoy rubbing his chin in the plant. If you have full sun, plant your flowering herbs, roses, geraniums, basil and a bay tree.

Lover's Lane – Curling up with your lover surrounded by scented herbs, what could be more romantic? Roses, lavender, musk mallow, lemon balm and lemon thyme, bergamot, clary sage, soapwort and sweet rocket will all fill the air with their sweet scent. The beautiful colors of the flowers will also inspire romance.

Solitary Reflection – a bench in a secluded patio where you can read a book and enjoy some tea is a perfect place to grow your favourite herbs. This is a good place to grow a Zen garden with a fountain in one section. Chinese chives, coriander, oriental poppy, bamboo and perhaps a Peony are plants to consider for such a garden. Jasmine is nice to grow if you have an arbor over your bench, as it is a vigorous climber with fragrant pink flowers. You can get more ideas from the theme gardens mentioned below.



The thyme groundcovers grow well in containers. Creeping thyme, above, and woolly thyme, below, spill over the edge of these old world pots.





Theme Gardens of Delight

Planting your first herbal theme garden could be compared to falling in love.

You're always thinking about it, you're nervous about things working out and you just want to spend as much time in your garden as possible.

So have some fun with planning and planting your theme gardens. There are many to choose from.

The Culinary Garden

My first theme garden is the culinary bed, which is the closest to the kitchen. I am planning another culinary garden in containers for our

sundeck, as that would be even closer to my kitchen. If you haven't decided where to put a plant in the ground, containers are a great way to group plants.

For my culinary garden, I planted some rosemary, thyme, oregano, chives and parsley. When the weather gets warmer, I will add some basil, one of the few annual herbs.

As most herbs are perennials, you plant them once and they will be there for years to come.

Culinary gardens can also be sub-divided into their own separate themes.

You might want to try one for tea herbs, salad herbs, and herbs for favorite ethnic foods.

Tea Herbs

If you enjoy drinking different herbal teas, it could be fun to grow your own herbs to make blends. These are herbs like lemon balm, lemon verbena, chamomile, sage and mint. Bergamot, particularly Orange Bergamot, is another one to consider, as it has an aroma reminiscent of Earl Grey tea.

Salad Herbs

With warmer weather, plant herbs that are great for salads. These are herbs like arugula, basil, salad burnet, sorrel, lovage, tarragon, borage and fennel. Basil can only be planted in warm weather. If you

want to start on it early, keep it in a greenhouse. Herbs like arugula, also known as rocket, need to be trimmed regularly. Arugula has a tendency to bolt in hot weather so it is a good herb to start early in the year.

Herbs for Ethnic Foods

You could devote an entire section to favorite herbs used in cooking ethnic dishes. Ethnic cooking is extremely popular these days and having a good supply of fresh herbs on hand could inspire you to cook more of your favorite ethnic foods.

Asian or Zen garden

An Asian garden with a peaceful Zen-like appearance will not only produce the plants you want but could also provide an escape from daily life with ornaments or statuary.

Herbs for an Asian garden might include ginger, saffron, ginseng, lemon grass, lombok chilies, green perilla, Chinese chives, Chinese mustard or shiso. You might wish to grow bamboo as part of the Asian garden and then decorate it perhaps with a Buddha or an Oriental lantern. Gravel paths and some stones placed for their effect can also add to the Zen-like effect. If you are inspired by the culture of Tibet and Nepal, you might want to add prayer flags to your garden,

perhaps emanating from a central focal point.

Refer to the section on Feng Shui in the garden for more assistance on planning an Asian or Zen garden.

Flowers to Brighten the Asian Garden

When we were in Nepal to adopt our daughter, I noticed a lot of dried marigold chains hung in loops from the eaves of buildings or looped like a necklace around the statue of Buddha. I didn't notice any marigolds growing but we were in the city of Kathmandu, so perhaps they were grown in a garden located outside of the city. The bright orange of marigolds make an interesting contrast to the greens of herbs and will certainly brighten up your garden. Did you know that marigolds, officially known as *Calendula*, are considered herbs and certainly have a place in your herb garden.

Oriental poppies are another flower to consider using in the Asian herb garden. Many of us are familiar with poppies and the bright red color of the flowers.

The Peony is another familiar flower associated with the Orient. The root has been used medicinally but it's the bright large pink, white or red or purplish-red blooms that are striking in the garden.

The Spanish Garden

I love Mexican food and like to have herbs available to add to my cooking. If you do too, then you might wish to have a section of herbs devoted to Spanish dishes. Cilantro is one of the most popular herbs to grow for Mexican dishes. Jalapeno, Ancho and pimiento pepper as well as chilies and cumin will enliven Spanish food. If you live in a dry climate, you might wish to grow some herbs that like the heat. In a wetter climate, some succulents will do nicely. Some brightly colored flowers such as calendula can punch up the scene.

Decorating for a Spanish garden can be fun; you might wish to find a little statue of a donkey. Or perhaps a statue of a sleeping Mexican, maybe a large Sombrero, the skull of a long-horned steer, a collection of pottery or perhaps a broken clay pot on its side can all add to the effect.

The Indian Garden

Cooking with Indian foods is another popular trend. These include herbs such as fennel, black mustard, black cumin, coriander, garlic and shallots. You might include flowering

herbs like hollyhock, which is indigenous to India.

A statue of a monkey or Buddha might be considered as a decorative element along with a place to burn incense. When we traveled to Nepal (where many of the people practice Buddhism) to get our daughter, every morning and evening we would smell the incense the people burned. Its fragrance enhanced the night air. You don't have to be a practicing Buddhist to enjoy burning incense. Statues of Buddha have been placed in temple gardens since ancient times and the activity of gardening is closely associated with Buddhism.

The Buddhists believe the elements in the garden represent things relating to minds and how we think. The soil represents the fertile ground of Buddha's mind. The plants represent community, which is expressed as Sangha. The garden represents an open temple, expressed as Dhamma.

So if the garden is regarded as a mind; then paths represent ways to enlightenment, the soil represents the state of our Karma, planting represents fruitful and blossoming ideas, and the seasons represent fluctuations of the mind.

The Fragrance or Scented Herb Garden

Herbs are wonderful to enjoy for their flowers and scent. On a hot, sunny day or warm summer's evening, it is heavenly to indulge in the aroma of herbs. I say indulge, because that is what I have often done. When I walked beside my herbs, I would let me hand drag through the branches. Or I crushed the leaves and held it up to my nose, inhaling the smell of lavender, bergamot, lemon thyme or lemon balm. It's such a wonderful and relaxing way to forget about your cares.

I started out with lavender, one of my favorites, in my first garden, but since then I have branched out (pardon the pun) to plant other herbs.

I planted lemon balm, bee balm aka bergamot (*monarda didyma*), lemon thyme and cardinal sage.

Lemon balm and lemon thyme both have fresh, astringent lemony scents, as their name suggest. Bergamot has rich red flowers and an eau-de cologne scent. But rub the leaf of bee balm and its has a the orange peel and black tea scent reminiscent of Earl Grey tea. It brings to mind relaxing afternoons enjoying tea and crumpets or scones.

With all these scents envel-

oping the air, it didn't take long for the bees, dragonflies, butterflies and hummingbirds to find their way to the garden. That is one of the joys of creating a scented herb garden - it increases the natural wildlife in your environment. I'm not sure how many would find you if you have a 15th floor balcony, but I'm pretty sure the bees and hummingbirds would be drawn by the scent.

There are herbs that evoke scents of camphor, cinnamon, lime, pineapple, mint and the balsam-resin aroma of rosemary. There are new varieties to consider, such as chocolate mint or caraway-scented thyme.

When planning a scented herb garden, it's nice to consider putting a bench or some kind of seating nearby so you can sit and enjoy the smell. The herbs need warmth, sunshine and light breezes to release their scent. Look for an area that can contain the scent, perhaps a wall, hedge, lattice or trellis. Perhaps plan a winding path to a cosy corner. Think about planting herbs at various levels, so you can enjoy the scent at your feet, hand and nose height and above your head. This is easy to do if you have a balcony as you can hang herbs off the balcony or above your head in hanging baskets.

In our garden, we have a wall and fence between us and the neighbors. I'm planning on

planting my scented flowering garden next to the fence. There is a small space between the fence and wall where I can plan scented herbs that will dangle down the wall.

I'm also going to put in a bench with maybe a small table to put drinks and a book, all to invite more time in the garden. But, knowing my, I will probably be looking around my garden thinking, 'I should prune that herb back,' or, 'I better pull up some weeds over there before they get out of hand.' Still, after I have done my gardening, what could be more rewarding than to get a glass of iced tea, made with lemon balm leaves or lemon thyme leaves, and sit back to enjoy the scents of my herb garden.

The Cosmetic Garden

Besides scented herbs, planting herbs for cosmetic uses is another attractive way to enjoy them. You might wish to combine both gardens, or focus your efforts on herbs that you can use for home-made cosmetics. There are some great resources available for making cosmetics, one of them is available online at www.makeyourowncosmetics.com.

I have made my own skin creams and plan to make other

cosmetics as my supply of plants increases.

One herb to consider for cosmetics is hollyhock, which has large attractive flowers that have been used as an emollient ingredient in cosmetics.

Hollyhock, also known as rose mallow, has flowers that come in various colors. I have grown one with black flowers, but they also come in pink flowers. I was looking forward to seeing the blooms on the hollyhock in the third garden I planted. Unfortunately, the deer had other plans and made a nice lunch of it. When I went to check on my garden the next day, my hollyhock was stripped bare. Darn!

Of course, the deer will leave strong-scented rosemary with its piney leaves alone and they won't eat oregano either. We installed a fence last fall so now I won't have to worry about the deer. I can grow all the beautiful herbs I want.

Besides hollyhock, you may consider growing herbs such as hibiscus, chamomile, lemon balm or lemon thyme, scented geranium, calendula or marigold and of course, roses. There are also various spices to use in herbal cosmetics. These include coriander seeds, cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon and orris root.

Indian women have long known the secret of using herbs

and spices to look and smell good. They use spices such as sandalwood and turmeric for skin care, henna to color the hair, palms and soles and natural oils to perfume their bodies.

While it's difficult to grow plants that produce spices in colder climates, you can still grow a large variety of herbs and source the spices you need from local health food stores or visit our website www.herbalcollective.ca to find what you need.

Herbs and spices can be used to make creams, sachet, potpourri, soaps, oils, shampoos, bath products and much more.

The Astrological Garden

Herbs have long been associated with astrology. Culpeper's herbal of 1653 attributed a heavenly body to each herbs. Culpeper was a physician who made exaggerated claims for the medicinal powers of herbs. He also linked herbs with astrology to such a degree that he lost credibility in the eyes of scholarly physicians. Herbs have been connected to various planets as well as signs of the Zodiac.

You could design your astrological garden as a six-pointed star with a circle in the middle. This circle could also

represent a full moon. The lines of the circle would be your pathway that would give you access to the herb beds. A sundial could be placed in the middle of the circle.

Another design could be a crescent moon with two circles on either end representing a full moon. Or, you could choose a constellation and copy the design for your garden plan. Perhaps the big dipper? The lines of the big dipper could be the pathway with the herbs planted in the middle of the dipper. I have always linked the constellation Orion, perhaps because I find it easy to pick out in the night sky. The lines of Orion could be the pathway and Orion's belt could be part of the pathway or you might choose to make three circular beds or use containers to represent the belt.

There are any number of ways to incorporate the constellations of the heavens into your garden plan.

Following are the various star signs and the herbs that have been linked to them.

Aquarius – elderberry, fumitory and mullein

Pisces – lungwort, meadowsweet and rosehip

Aries – cowslip, garlic, hops, mustard and rosemary

Taurus – coltsfoot, lovage, mints, thyme

Gemini – caraway, dill,

lavender, parsley, vervain

Cancer – agrimony, balm, daisies, hyssop and jasmine

Leo – bay, borage, chamomile, marigold, poppy, rue

Virgo – fennel, savory, southernwood, valerian

Libray – pennyroyal, primrose, violets, yarrow

Scorpio – basil, tarragon, wormwood

Saggittarius – feverfew, houseleek, mallow, sage

Capricorn – comfrey, sorrel, Solomon's seal

* *The Complete Book of Herbs*, John Lust

The Moonlight Garden

Sitting outside on a warm summer's eve is a wonderful way to enjoy your garden, particularly when you can watch the moon come up and count the stars in the sky.

Most people enjoy their gardens during the daytime, but planning a garden that you can enjoy by moonlight adds another dimension to experiencing herbs.

At our home where I had my second herb garden, I would often sit out on the balcony at night, tea or a glass of wine in my hand, and listen to the sound of frogs and crickets or watch the birds (or was it bats?) flit through the air. I would add that the scents of herbs drifting

through the air greatly enhance the experience as well.

Herbs that are silvery appear best in the moonlight, as well as plants with white flowers (such as yarrow) and blue or pale pink colors.

While I hadn't specifically planted herbs for moonlight, I did have the yarrow, with its pale pink or yellow flowers. I also had woolly lamb's ears, which has silvery white leaves that are quite noticeable in the moonlight.

The thyme species has a silvery effect in the moonlight, particularly if the flowers are white. Sweet cicely has masses of white flowers while rosemary has pale blue flowers that glow the moonlight. Plant some flowers in with the herbs, such as Forget-me-nots, with their mass of pale blue and white flowers, and daisies, which has large white flowers sure to be noticed in the moonlight.

White garden features such as statues or bird baths will reflect moonlight. Water from a pond or fountain will add another dimension to the moonlight, as moving water will sparkle in a different way that it does during the day.

Fairy Gardens

Fairy gardens are a fun way to bring out your inner child or to delight a daughter, niece or

grand-daughters. Fairy gardens usually contain small, delicate herbs such as Corsican mint, chamomile, bergamot or salad burnet and herbal flowers like Johnny-jump-ups, Sweet Violet and Love-in-a-Mist. These herbs and flowers give a delicate, airy feel to a fairy garden

When I planted my fairy garden, I added elements like a small bridge over a dry stream bed (lined with shiny stones to designate the stream) and a pathway that led to a tree. On the tree was installed a fairy door and window. You can use fairy statues for your garden and some of them come with solar lights.

I've noticed in garden shops that fairy statues holding solar lights are quite popular and definitely something to consider for your fairy garden.

You can get fairy statues in various sizes and positions. I have a fairy statue that I bought for my second garden, before I had even thought about planning a fairy garden. She is lying on her stomach, resting her chin on her hands.

I didn't have my daughter when I planted my fairy garden, but when I brought her home, she took to my herb garden and is enthusiastic about watering and weeding.

While serious gardeners might think a fairy garden is frivolous, I think gardening is really about doing what gives

you pleasure, whether it's a fairy garden or a productive vegetable garden.

France Provincial

When I think of herbs from France, what comes to mind is fields of lavender. I won't grow a herb garden without lavender. I usually have a half dozen or more plants. The beauty and fragrance of lavender makes it one of the most popular herbs in the garden.

Lavender is native to the Southern Alps of France. In the 16th century, the Provencal peasants produced lavender oil to heal wounds and expel intestinal worms.*

There are many different varieties of lavender. One of my favorites is Provence Lavender (*lavandula intermedia*) which has blue flowers and is valued for its high oil content.

The True Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) thrives in the chalky soils and hot, dry climate of higher altitudes of Provence, where it was picked systematically at the end of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, fields of lavender were first planted, at altitudes above 700 m. Since the true lavender grows best at over 700 m, a hybrid, was cultivated at lower altitudes. This is lavandin, a pollination of true lavender and spike lavender, which makes a hybrid that

forms a highly-developed large round cluster.

True Lavender has the most subtle essential oil and is highly sought after by perfume makers and laboratories.

Spike Lavender (*Lavandula Latifolia*) has wide leaves and long floral stems with several flower bracts, while French Lavender (*Lavendula stoechas*) is a wild lavender that grows throughout the region and is collected for the perfume industry.

You could grow a theme garden around the different types of lavender alone.

However, there is more to French herbs than lavender. Herbes de Provence is a popular mix of herbs used in cooking. These include such herbs as basil, thyme, marjoram, summer savory, rosemary, lavender buds, fennel seeds and dried sage.

Or you could grow bay, parsley and thyme for the popular Boquet Garni that was commonly used in cooking for soups, stews and sauces.

You might wish to grow a lavender hedge or border and grow the other herbs inside, where you can find them quickly when you want to put together a 'herbs de provence' mix or a 'bouquet garni.'

I tend to use lavender as a border in my herb garden. When it blooms, it has a stunning effect on the entire garden. Just remember to leave enough room

between plants and the edge of the border for growth.

The Monastic Garden

The monks in medieval times often grew herbs in protective gardens with walls. They used many herbs in making spirits or liquers or as elixirs, tonics and balms.

The monks cultivated ‘physick’ gardens to grow the raw materials for healing medicines.

Herbal drinks were often mixed, with ale, milk, or vinegar. Potions were often made with herbs mixed with honey. Ointments and salves were concocted with herbs and butter.

Medicinally, herbs were used for common ailments such as bleeding noses, baldness, sunburn, loss of appetite or insect and dog bites. Herbs were also used in amulets or as charms against evil and diseases. Herbs were used for strewing, an old-fashioned term which meant the herbs were put on floors where their aroma would absorb odours when stepped on. Medieval people washed infrequently and only the wealthy would wash every three or four weeks.

Combine the unwashed people with filthy animals that roamed freely through their homes and the use for aromatic strewing herbs becomes obvi-

ous.

Many strewing herbs also contain potent oils that deter fleas, lice and other bugs.

In Thomas Tusser’s famous 1557 book, *A Hundreth Good Points of Husbandrie*, he includes a list of 21 strewing herbs. Some of the more well-known strewing herbs are basil, lemon balm, sweet fennel, germander, hyssop, lavender, santolina, marjoram, pennyroyal, sage, tansy and winter savory.

Herbs were also associated with love and marriage such as Chaste tree, Meadow Rue and Wild Strawberry.

Other herbs were added to liquers to give them a deeper, well-rounded flavor. These include angelica, anise, balm, caraway, coriander, elecampane, fennel, hyssop, mint, speedwell, sweet cicely, sweet woodruff, thyme and violets. Some of these herbs also have culinary and medicinal uses as well so they would be a good start to a monastic garden.

Monastic gardens were often grown in geometrical shapes with boxwood hedges used in 14th century Monastery gardens. These knot gardens contained culinary and medicinal herbs.

A boxwood hedge initially takes some work to get it planted and established. You might try a design of triangles and diamonds or a series of

squares and rectangles. You could plant a boxwood hedge by yourself or hire a landscaper to do the grunt work. Search online for designs of different Monastic gardens to find a design you like.

One design typical of the ‘physick’ garden involves a trellis and central archway marking the entrance which leads to four rectangular beds, two on either side of a central pathway.

With this kind of plan, you could grow strewing herbs in one bed, medicinal medieval herbs in another bed, culinary herbs in a third bed and herbs for liquers in a fourth bed.

The Biblical Garden

Herbs were often mentioned in the Bible, sometimes specifically or other times generally, as a reference to ‘bitter herbs.’ Herbs are rich in history and legend and you really get a sense of that when you read how they were used and referred to in the Bible.

Most of the herbs mentioned in the Bible are suited to the arid, hot climate of the Middle East, because that is where the people of Biblical times lived.

What I find fascinating is that people used herbs in so many ways during those Biblical times. Besides the culinary,

and medicinal uses, herbs like hyssop were used for cleansing, they were used to sprinkle holy water (rue), they were used to tithe (dill), they were used as symbols (rosemary), they were used as bookmarks (costmary) and of course, for anointing the dead. There are also many other ways in which herbs were used in Biblical times.

At the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis 2:5, herbs are set apart as distinct from other plants, when it says; And every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew...".(King James Version). These two verses show that there was a definite distinction made between the herbs and other plants of the fields.

It is obvious that, according to the Bible, they were created to be distinctive.*

Herbs were prized plants for many reasons and I think God gave us herbs to use but also to respect.

Growing a Biblical theme garden can give you a link to the past. You would need a hot, sunny location, of course. The following are some of the herbs mentioned in the Bible.

I would start with the tall herbs, like dill and wormwood. Cumin, hyssop, rosemary and costmary were all used during bible times as mentioned earlier.

The tall herbs would be planted towards the back of the

garden and the lower growing herbs like rosemary and costmary towards the front of the garden.

North American Indian Herb Garden

Planning a herb garden around the herbs used by North American Indians, or first nations as they are known in Canada, gives an interesting insight into the plants used by these cultures.

Their pharmacopeia was huge and covered many plants, as many as 600. We will take a look at a few of the plants the First Nations peoples considered important. Some are what people consider common weeds and not what most people would cultivate, though they are considered useful plants. These are herbs like chickweed, stinging nettle and plantain.

Most people would rather cultivate plants like Echinacea, wintergreen, juniper, vailla leaf, roses and wild mint or horsemint.

Echinacea, also known as Purple Prairie Coneflower, was important to Native American tribes and is commonly associated with building the immunity to prevent colds and flus. This plant can grow up to five feet tall and has stunning showy, large pink or purple daisy-like

flowers.

Wintergreen is a small shrubby plant with a long root-stock, from which grow the three to six inch branches. The plant contains methyl salicylate, a close relative of aspirin. It has been used for headache, rheumatism and other aches and pains. The glossy green leaves turn red in the fall or winter.

Juniper, aka Sacred Cedar, was important as the berries were first used by the First Nations in the Pacific Northwest. The tart berries were crushed and cooked with wild buffalo. The berries have also been used to make tea. The distilled oil of the berries is what flavors gin.

The oil is also good for bone and joint problems, though it should always be diluted in a base oil. Avoid if kidneys are inflamed.

Roses don't come to mind right away when one thinks of herbs though they have a place in the herb garden. The First Nations used the rose hips as a important food source, as they are high in Vitamin C, more so than oranges. Dried rose hips were boiled covered for 10 minutes to make a tea. Sometimes a ½ tsp of mint was added to give it a different flavour. Dried rose hips keep well over winter.

Wild Mint or Horsemint has downy leaves and yellowish flowers with red spots. The

American Indians used it for fever, chills and inflammations.

Vanilla Leaf (*Achlys triphylla*) is common in British Columbia and was used by First Nations as an insect repellent. The dried leaves were hung in their homes to keep the mosquitoes away and for their sweet vanilla like scent.

A Woman's Herb Garden

Growing a garden with herbs that specifically benefit women's conditions is a unique way to understand how useful herbs can be for women. This following is some of the most common herbs used to help women but you may find others to add in future. These are herbs like black cohosh, blue cohosh, Chaste tree (vitex), Lady's Mantle, Dong Quai and Queen of the Meadow.

Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) aka Black snakeroot, bugbane, squawroot, grows wild in North America. It is reputed to support the female reproductive organs during peri-menopause and menopause.

Blue Cohosh (*caulophyllum thalictroides*) aka squaw root, blue ginseng - bears yellow-green flowers and a pea-sized dark blueberry. It is used to regulate menstrual flow, especially suppressed menstruation.

Chaste Tree (vitex)

Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) which has pretty purple flowers, is a semi-hardy tree or shrub that grows up to 8 ft. It is known for balancing female hormones and helps with PMS, fluid retention, endometriosis and fibroids as well as infertility and menopausal symptoms.

Lady's Mantle

(*Alchemilla vulgaris*) aka Bear's Foot, Leontopodium, Lion's Foot, Nine Hooks, Stellaria is a herb that likes some shade and grows up to one foot tall in tight mounds with soft gray-green velvet-lobed leaves. The tea is drunk for pregnancy, contracting the uterus after childbirth, and menopausal symptoms.

Dong Quai, which grows in Asian countries, is a member of the celery family and is often included in herbal formulas to treat abnormal menstruation and uterine bleeding.

The Grecian or Roman Garden

Planning an herb garden with Greek or Roman influences would convey an elegant design with graceful curves, statues and a pool or fountain. When the Romans conquered Europe, they took a vast knowledge of herbs with them, introducing more than 200 different herbs. They had great faith in the healing

powers of herbs and carried seeds and plants with them to cultivate and use wherever they went.

Some of the herbs they introduced were fennel, sage, borage and betony, parsley, rosemary and thyme.

When I think of planning a Grecian garden, I think of more formal shapes. Herbs that lend themselves well to this type of garden are the Mediterranean herbs like rosemary, thyme, sage and lavender. These can be pruned to give a formal appearance.

Other herbs to include are lemon thyme, Greek oregano, French tarragon and sweet marjoram. The Greeks called sweet marjoram, a type of oregano, Oros ganos or 'Joy of the Mountain,' as it perfumed the air with its sweet scent and was interesting to look at with its purplish flowers.

Bay trees will give an elegant formal appearance. Bay is not a hardy plant so it is best to plant it in containers, which you can take inside for winter. French tarragon also has a tall, elegant appearance. Both plants would look good in urns.

You might plan your garden with a pergola or two bay trees at the entrance leading down a path to a Greek statue in the centre of the garden. Or you might wish to have a birdbath or fountain in the centre flanked by two statues on the edge of path.



Harvesting herbs is one of the most enjoyable aspects of growing them.

Now you finally get to enjoy your bounty.

Herbs will reward you with their abundant growth.

There are many ways to enjoy your harvest.

Ensure that you have preserved herbs properly, so you can enjoy them for many months to come.

Drying and Preserving Herbs

Harvesting herbs is one of the most satisfying pastimes for herb growers.

One way to enjoy herbs is to dry them and preserve for later use. Collect herbs in their prime, usually just before they flower. This differs from plant to plant, so you will need to observe when the plant is just

coming into bud. That is the time to harvest them.

Of course, with herbs like lavender, you will want to dry them shortly after they come into flower.

Don't try to pick them like daisies. Use pruning shears or cut them with a sharp scissors. Cut only one-third of the leaves for perennials, as this will allow

further growth for later. Sometimes you can prune a herb several times in the growing season.

One of the traditional ways to dry them is to gather a small bunch and put an elastic around the stems. I have found that an elastic band is best to use as herbs shrink when they dry. Then put a paper bag around the

entire 'bouquet' and hang it upside down in a cool, dry, dark place.

You will know the herbs are completely dry when the leaves are crumbly. Take the bouquet apart. If you are using culinary herbs like rosemary or oregano, crumble the leaves off the stems and put in containers for later use. If you are using dried flowering herbs for arrangements, then you will keep the flowers and stems intact. Though you might wish to take a few stems apart from lavender, for instance, to use in bath bags, or to make little sleep pillows or potpourri.

A faster way to dry herbs, if you have the space, is to lay them on racks or trays in a single layer and put in a warm, airy place for 24 hours. You could use the rack in your oven and put it on warm (lowest heat).

The herbs should be completely dry when done but still be green. If they are brown, the heat has been too high or the herbs have taken too long to dry.

Some herbs dry very well while others completely lose their flavor. Oregano dries very well while lemon balm and parsley, for instance, are best when used fresh.

Keep in mind that the flavor and intensity of herbs increases when dried. Use half the amount of a dried herb as

you would for fresh.

Herbs that dry well include sage, rosemary, bay, mint, lovage, thyme and oregano. Fennel and dill are best kept as seed.

Store herbs in small glass jars in a dry, cool dark place. People commonly store herbs in a spice rack next to the stove but this is not a good idea, as the heat from cooking can cause them to lose flavor.

Freezing Herbs

Freezing herbs is one way to preserve delicate herbs that don't dry well. These are herbs like basil, sorrel, chervil, dill and tarragon. You can pick the leaves or cut little stems and place in a freezer bag.

Another way to preserve them is to chop the leaves, mix with water and freeze in ice cube trays. The cubes can be melted as required and used in soups, stews, sauces, etc.

I did mine in a blender and this worked out quite well for later use, giving soups and sauces the same intensity of flavor (or close to it) as herbs picked in the summer.

Another good way to preserve herbs is to make a herbal butter. Simply mix a tablespoon or two of fresh herbs with a half cup of butter. You might also wish to freeze the herbal butter in ice cube trays.

When frozen, you can simply pop them out and have individual sizes ready for whatever use you have in mind.

Uses

Most people use the herbs from their harvest for culinary reasons, whether it's cooking or making vinegars or using them in a salad.

Some people, though, will use the harvested herbs for medicinal reasons.

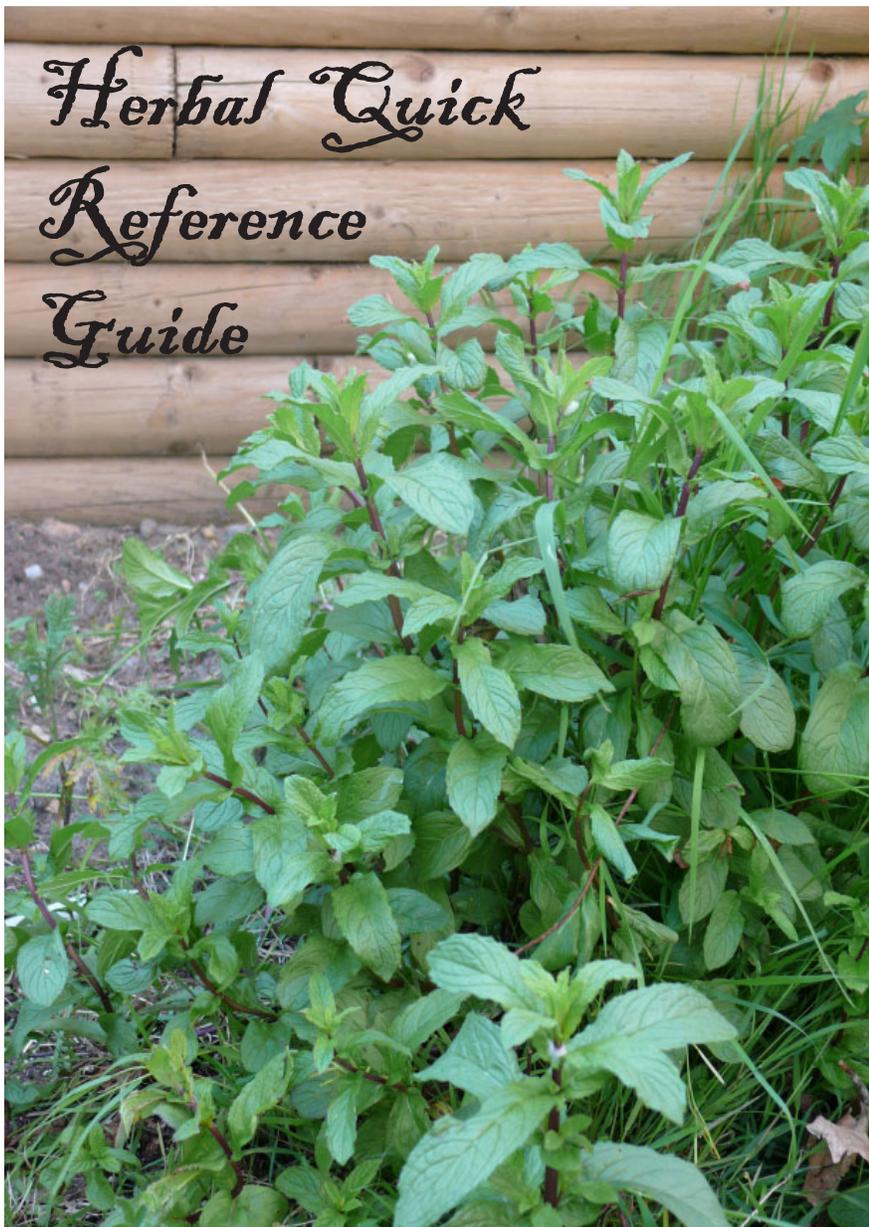
In this case, you need to have some knowledge of what you are doing with a particular plant and what you intend to use it for medicinally.

There are many simple folk remedies where you can make medicinal herbs without needing extensive training.

Making a herbal tea is one of the simplest ways to enjoy herbs medicinally.

But even then, you need to be careful. For anything else, be wary that some herbs can have contraindications for specific medical conditions.

Other than medicinal and culinary uses, herbs can be enjoyed as cosmetics and for use in making herbal crafts such as wreaths.



Many herb gardeners have been confused by the many varieties of herbs available.

You could grow entire gardens devoted to the varieties of mint or thyme, let alone other herbs.

When choosing herbs, ensure you have the correct botanical name to ensure you get the plant you want.

We have given you this guide for exactly these reasons.

For each plant listed, the common name is provided first followed by the botanical name and then a brief description of the plant.

Angelica, (*Angelica archangelica*)

Flowers June-August, with greenish-yellow flowers that have a honey-like odor. Seeds are diuretic and diaphoretic. Use 1 tsp. crushed seeds in ½ cup

boiling water for tea. Useful to stimulate appetite, flatulence and muscle spasms. Young leaves and stalks can be candied. Cook stalks with rhubarb, gooseberries or plums to reduce acidity.

Basil, Sweet, (*Ocimum basilicum*)

Basil, Bush, (*Ocimum minimum*)

Both basilis are tender annuals. Sweet basil has large,

shiny, dark green leaves. It is best known for its use in pesto sauce and pairs well with tomatoes, eggs, mushrooms and pasta dishes.

Bush basil grows six inches high and is bushy with small pale green leaves. It also has a good flavour.

Bay, (*Laurus nobilis*)

Bay trees grow 30-40 ft. and should be brought in where winters are severe. The shiny,

smooth, dark leaves have a strong aromatic scent and is one of the three herbs in bouquet garni to flavour cooking.

Bergamot, (*Monarda didyma*)

A fragrant plant with pale leaves and vivid red flowers, this perennial is also known as Bee Balm as bees are so attracted by the scent. Needs partial shade and rich moist soil to survive. The leaves were best known for flavouring tea and this is what gives Earl Grey its special flavour.

Borage, (*Borago officinalis*)

A tall, hairy-leaved annual with vivid blue star-shaped flowers, its blooms for many months. Both flowers and leaves have a fresh cucumber flavour. Best grown from seed as it doesn't transplant well.

Chamomile, (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

This low-growing annual with daisy-like white flowers has a lovely scent that is commonly used in tea. It grows easily from seed and does well in containers. The flower, which has petals that turn back, distinguishes the true chamomile from other forms. When this occurs the flowers are ready to be picked for drying. The flowers can be used in tea or as a

herbal rinse for fair hair, a mouthwash, as a soothing eyebath or a face wash to keep skin soft and supple. Chamomile can also be used in a facial steam to relieve a heavy head cold. But it is best loved as a tea to soothe upset stomach and indigestion.

Chives, (*Allium schoenoprasum*)

A hardy perennial which grows in clumps of tiny bulbs, chives have a mild onion flavour which makes a superb seasoning for many dishes. Makes an excellent container and indoor plant.

Comfrey, (*Symphytum officinale*)

A tall, wide-spreading perennial with big coarse rough green leaves, comfrey has been an important medicinal healing plant for centuries. Fresh leaves were laid on cuts, bruises and open wounds to promote healing. Comfrey helps breakdown other compost materials rapidly and is a good mulch to put around other herbs during the growing season. It also makes a great 'tea' to fertilize other plants.

Coriander, (*Coriandrum sativum*)

Small annual plant which blooms with white to reddish flowers that bloom June to

August. The spicy seeds are anti-spasmodic, aromatic and carminative. Steep 2tsp dried seeds in 1 cup water. One or two crushed seeds give a fragrant flavour to a cup of coffee.

Cumin, (*Cuminum cyminum*)

A spicy herb grown for its aromatic seed, this annual grows 1-2 feet tall. Seeds are used in Indian, Middle Eastern and Mexican cooking.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

A tall feathery perennial that grows up to five feet, fennel is best known for its seeds that closely resemble dill. But fennel has a sweet anise flavour. It is best known as the 'fish herb,' as its seeds or leaves give an excellent flavour when added to the water for poached or boiled fish.

Another fennel variety, finocchio (*F.v.dulce*) has an edible swollen leaf base like celery. It needs a very long warm growing season and plenty of moisture.

Lavender, (*Lavandula vera* or *L. officinalis*)

Lavender is a favorite shrub that is best known for its aromatic purple flowers, which bloom in June. In Medieval times, lavender was used in

cooking and medicine. Lavender can be made as a tea -, use 1 tsp. leaves in ½ cup water. But it is commonly used as an essential oil and is known for calming the nerves to reduce insomnia. Also used for flatulence, migraine headache, fainting and dizziness.

Marjoram, Sweet

(*Majorana hortensis*)

Wild Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*)

Oregano (*Origanum vulgare subsp. hirtum*)

When people buy oregano, they are often getting a variety of marjoram, usually Sweet Marjoram.

In the Mediterranean, where marjoram grows freely, it has also been given the name *oros gano*, or 'Joy of the Mountains' from which we get the name oregano.

A half hardy annual which has purple-pink flowers in summer, Sweet Marjoram has a sweet and spicy flavour, which is mild compared to the other varieties. While this is okay for cooking fresh, it doesn't dry as well as oregano.

If you're looking for oregano, the kind that is used to flavour pizza, look for Oregano with the proper botanical name. When dried, it has an intense flavour which is also excellent in soup and sauces.

Mint, Peppermint, (Mentha Piperita)

There are many mints but the most common is peppermint. It is a hardy perennial which thrives in light shade in rich moist soil and is best grown in a bottomless container set in the ground as it sends out runners that could encroach on other plants. Peppermint also grows well in containers.

Peppermint leaves are used to make a hot or iced tea but the leaves can also be added to fruit juices, fruit salads, sprinkled on carrots or zucchini. Peppermint tea or essential oil is used medicinally for digestive disorders, nervousness, insomnia, cramps, coughs, nausea, abdominal pains, headaches and migraines.

Oregano – see Marjoram

Parsley (Petroselinum crispum)

A perennial herb that is usually treated as an annual, parsley grows two feet high and tolerates light shade. It grows slowly grown from seed so most gardeners will buy plants. It is grown practically everywhere and is commonly used as a garnish in restaurant meals. But parsley has many more uses. Chewed fresh, it can help to freshen breath. Parsley is rich in Vitamin C.

A tea made from the seeds and leaves can be used for jaundice, asthma, coughs and suppressed or difficult menstruation. Parsley should not be used if kidney inflammation exists.

Pennyroyal (Hedeoma pulegioides)

European Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*)

Also known as fleabane or *Mentha pulegium*, pennyroyal is a pungent member of the mint family. The plant can be used to stuff dog beds and put in doghouses to discourage fleas.

American Indians used pennyroyal tea for headache and for menstrual cramps and pain. The tea makes a good external wash for skin eruptions, rashes and itching. Use 1 tsp. herb to 1 cup water.

Both varieties of pennyroyal are similar in odour and uses.

Rosemary (Rosemary officinalis)

An evergreen shrub with aromatic pine-needle like leaves, rosemary originated in the Mediterranean and loves hot sun.

Rosemary has historical association with the Virgin Mary, the pale blue flowers are believed to have taken their colour from her blue cloak when she threw it over a rosemary

bush to dry. Rosemary has medicinal, culinary and cosmetic uses. The essential oil is reputed to help sharpen the mind.

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

A shrubby plant that grows wild in the Mediterranean, sage has purple, blue or white flowers which bloom in June and July.

Sage has a strong flavour which should be used sparingly in recipes. It is most often associated with stuffing for Thanksgiving turkey dinners. Sage is also used as a smudging herb in native ceremonies.

Salad Burnet, (*Poterium sanguisorba*)

Salad Burnet is a dainty looking plant that is actually a hardy perennial. Native to the Mediterranean, it has small round red flowers that bloom for three months in the summer. Salad burnet has been used to flavour wines and can be taken as a tea. The leaves have a fresh cucumber flavour and can be used in salads. Or make a vinegar from the leaves for French dressing.

Sweet Cicely, (*Myrrhis odorata*)

Sweet Cicely is a perennial with a strong anise-like aroma that grows wild in Canada and the U.S. It grows easily from

seed. Known as the 'sugar saver' Sweet Cicely can be used to cut down the acidity and reduce sugar in recipes for rhubarb, red currants and gooseberries. Chew ripe seeds for indigestion or make a tea using chopped leaves. Chop leaves to use in recipes.

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Garden thyme is grown extensively in Europe, the U.S. and Canada. Thyme has a strong, spicy taste and aroma so it should be used sparingly in recipes. The small bluish-purple flowers bloom May to September. Medicinally, the component thymol is a powerful anti-septic used for hundreds of years.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Yarrow is a hardy perennial that grows about two feet tall with soft, dark green feathery leaves. The clusters of flat-topped flowers are white, pink or red.

A cosmetic herb that can help with healing minor ailments, yarrow was historically valued for its medicinal properties.



About the Author

Marilyn Zink has been growing herbs for nearly 15 years and will never get tired of it.

She is also the publisher/ editor of The Herbal Collective magazine, which circulates on Vancouver Island, B.C. and can also be accessed through her website, www.herbalcollective.ca

Marilyn is a wife and mother of two children.

Prior to starting her business, Marilyn was a full-time reporter with the Nanaimo Free Press (now the Nanaimo Daily News) in Nanaimo, B.C.

She plans to write more books on herbs. Sign up for her Free newsletter by visiting the Herbal Collective website www.herbalcollective.ca/mail.html to get tips on herbs and natural health and get updates on upcoming books.

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