

# **Top 5 Secrets to Growing Herbs**





*“As rosemary is to the Spirit, so  
Lavender is to the Soul”  
.....anonymous*

Growing herbs is one of the most rewarding pastimes, as it produces plants that are very useful in many ways.

Herbs have many qualities such as culinary, medicinal, aromatic, flowery or simply ornamental. Either way, they enhance the garden and add to the quality of life.

Herbs have been grown since ancient times and were an important part of kitchen gardens and the monks 'physic' gardens.

The monks designed herb gardens as a rectangle broken into smaller areas with two distinct gardens; a physic garden and a kitchen garden.

As the name suggests, the physic garden or herb garden grew medicinal plants and culinary herbs.

A member of the community who specialized in herbal remedies would tend the medicinal plants, gathering ingredients at the optimum time and using them to make therapeutic preparations.

The kitchen gardens supplied food for the community.

While we can learn from these medieval gardens, there are some secrets to growing herbs that beginning herb gardeners and even those more advanced at gardening may not realize it.

### Starting the Herb Garden Right



When many people get started with growing herbs, they may not know where to begin.

Growing herbs in pots is a good way to get a feel of which herbs you like to grow and how they respond to sun, shade and water.

Growing a single herb in one pot can really give you experience with that plant and get a feel for how it grows.

Plus if it is getting too much sun or not enough sun, it is easy to pick up the plant and move it to a different location.

Growing herbs in pots is also wonderful for small spaces such as patio homes and apartment dwellers who only have balconies.

There are many different designs for pots or containers from terra cotta to cedar beds and everything in between.

You can also get very creative growing the herbs in tiered plant stands, shelves or garden beds. There are so many different designs available that a large number of plants can be grown in a small space.

When you plant herbs directly into the ground, it's important to have a good design for your herbs and how they will grow.

You need to consider the growth requirements of different herbs regarding sun and shade, how much space they require and how often they need water or fertilizer.

### Getting the Right Soil



Getting the right soil can make a difference in how well herbs grow.

If you are growing herbs strictly in pots, they will require a different soil than herbs grown straight in the ground.

All soil requires some sort of preparation for plants to grow more effectively.

Some soils are more clay like or sandy so this will definitely require some type of fertilizer.

Testing the soil is a good start to determine what it needs. Some herbs require a richer, more moist soil to grow properly while others prefer a less rich, more dry soil.

But all herbs will require some fertilizer to grow properly.

Some herbs are heavier feeders and if you are using a good deal of the plant and harvesting it throughout the growing season, then it will require more fertilizer to keep producing.

Fertilizer helps to ensure that your soil is providing the nutrients your plants will need to grow.

This is why it is important to apply the appropriate type of fertilizer to ensure that a plant does not receive too much of a certain nutrient.

Applying the necessary fertilizer to your soil before planting your herbs means you are creating a well-balanced environment for your plants to grow.

Your plant's initial burst of growth tests may indicate that they have depleted certain nutrient levels in the soil and that another round of fertilization is needed.

### Choosing Herbs

Choosing herbs is a fun part of growing them, but do you start with seeds, cuttings or established plants?

Many people start with the basic culinary herbs like basil, thyme, garlic, oregano and rosemary.

There's also chives, dill, tarragon, lemon balm, mint, parsley, cilantro, marjoram, sage

Now you may want to start small with the popular culinary herbs but why limit yourself?

*'How I would love to be transported into a scented Elizabethan garden with herbs and honeysuckles, a knot garden and roses clambering over a simple arbor ....' ~Rosemary Verey*

There is so much more to discover and there are many herbs one can grow and benefit from.

It's important to know the requirement of each type of plant and the amount of sunlight they require.

One important secret with choosing herbs is to know the herb's botanical name as well as its common name.

Herbs belong to families just like people. When you know the botanical name, you can ensure you get exactly the right plant you are searching for.

Herbs like oregano have several different varieties. If you are searching for Greek



oregano, you may mistakenly purchase Sweet Marjoram, which is a milder form of oregano.

So this is why it's important to get the botanical name right. The botanical name for Greek oregano is *Origanum Vulgare* while

the botanical name for Sweet Marjoram is *Origanum Majorama*.

The location where you purchase your herbs can make a difference as not all plants are labeled properly.

Now if you are buying seeds you will want to check the package carefully to ensure you are purchasing the correct herb.

## Growing Herbs for Your Zone

This is another important secret to growing herbs.

Growing herbs are going to be different if you live in Northern Ontario as opposed to sunny Florida.

Zones are mapped out from 1-13, with 1 being the coldest and 13 being the hottest. Florida has a range of zone from 8-10 with the Florida keys being zone 11.

Knowing the zone you live in and a plant's hardiness will determine how that plant will grow.

Most people look at zones to determine a plant's winter hardiness but you also need to consider how much heat a plant can withstand, especially if you are in a hotter zone.

Lemongrass, for instance, likes a hotter zone while mint prefers a cooler zone with some shade.

When you keep these points in mind and know the zone you want to grow herbs in, then you will have more success in the garden.

### Harvesting Herbs

One of the great joys of growing herbs is of course harvesting them.

You can harvest culinary herbs, medicinal herbs and flowering aromatic herbs.

Ornamental herbs are not generally harvested but they are pruned as needed. But this again depends on the type of herb grown.

The popular herb basil is likely to be harvested more frequently as it is added to food or used to make the popular pesto dish.

Spanish lavender (*Lavendula Stoechas*) is a popular herb grown in landscape settings in North America.

It is generally not harvested for later use as the blooms don't dry well. French and English lavender is harvested for medicinal and aromatic purposes, as these blooms dry well and retain the volatile oils.

Unlike vegetables, most leafy herbs can be harvested on a regular basis, whenever some herbs are needed to enhance a meal or used to make tea, a pesto or added to a sauce.

Other herbs are harvested when they go to seed, such as anise seed or coriander, as the seed is the desired part of the herb.

Coriander is actually the seed of the herb known also as cilantro.

These 5 secrets to herb gardening can get you started.

But if you want to know more about growing herbs and the wide variety of herbs you can grow, please watch your email closely for details on an herb gardening course.



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