

When To Harvest Herbs for Drying

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11/19/2026

Late January is actually the perfect time to plan for drying herbs later in the year. While most outdoor herbs will not be ready for harvest until late spring or summer, understanding *when* and *how* to harvest now ensures you'll capture the best flavor and aroma when the time comes.

The general rule for drying herbs is to **harvest just before flowering**, when essential oils are at their peak. This provides the strongest fragrance and flavor for culinary and medicinal use. Common herbs such as basil, oregano, thyme, sage, rosemary, mint, and lemon balm all benefit from harvesting at this stage.

What to Do Now (January–February)

Winter is the time to decide which herbs you want to grow specifically for drying, order seeds, and plan garden space. It's the time to identify an indoor drying location—such as a closet, pantry, or spare room—that is warm, dry, dark, and well-ventilated. Gardeners growing herbs indoors or in greenhouses may already be able to make light harvests of parsley, chives, thyme, or mint.

When Harvest Season Arrives

Harvest herbs in the **morning after dew has dried but before midday heat**, when essential oils are most concentrated. Use clean scissors or pruners, cutting no more than one-third of the plant at a time for perennials. Tie small bundles and hang them upside down away from direct sunlight for two to four weeks, until leaves crumble easily.

Planning now helps ensure herbs are harvested at peak flavor and fragrance.



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Resources

Penn State Extension - <https://extension.psu.edu/lets-preserve-drying-herbs?>

Wisconsin Extension Master Gardeners - <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu/files/2015/12/drying-herbs.pdf>