

What's an Herb?

Botanist-any plant that dies back to the ground each year without forming a woody stem

Gardener-Plants that have culinary, medicinal aromatic or ornamental uses-these include lavender, rosemary and bay which form woody stems

NOT Spices-seeds, roots, barks and pods of tropical plants, ex. cinnamon, cloves, vanilla, saffron, hot peppers, black pepper, ginger, cardamom, star anise, nutmeg, coffee

GAME-match the common culinary herbs with names, share uses

Why should I include herbs in my garden?

culinary uses

craft uses

soaps and other body products

medicinal uses

attracts pollinators

herb lawns

just plain fun to grow

Others? DISCUSSION

Getting Started

Container, in-ground, raised bed? Indoor or Outdoor?

Separate herb garden-herb spiral, knot garden, theme garden-Biblical, tea, witch's, apothecary

Herbs mixed in with your other crops-companion planting, kitchen garden

Whichever you choose, it's best to start small and leave room for expansion.

Choose your gardening location:

6-8 hours of full sun

Well drained fertile, loamy soil

Close to a water source

Close to the kitchen if possible

Test and prepare your soil:

Submit a soil test to lab, Mark Plant Code ??? 210 Vegetable Gardening?

Aim for a pH of 6.3-6.8 for most herbs, lavender requires 6.5-7.0

Prepare you soil to a depth of 8"

Add compost to heavy, wet soil

Consider building a no-till or lasagna garden bed

Plan your layout:

Place perennial herbs in an area that you you not need to disturb later.

Herbs that spread by runners (mint family) should be contained to a depth of 10-12 inches or planted in a container.

Consider mature height-taller herbs in back or middle and shorter ones around the edges

Cool season herbs-cilantro, dill, anise and parsley need to be planted in the spring or fall or provided with some shade in the summer.

Other fun things to consider:

Companion planting-??? Need Good Source

Encouraging Habitat-bird bath, bird house, toad house, water source for pollinators

Decor-incorporate what you have "laying around"

Relax, have fun-herbs are overall easy

Acquire plants:

Annual herbs are best started from seed indoors or directly into the ground-read the seed packets for planting information-when to plant, spacing, etc.

Easier to purchase perennial herbs.

Detailed instructions can be found on the VT Publication.

Share favorite places to purchase seeds and plants! DISCUSSION

Plant your garden:

Wait until after danger of severe frost. In our area the date is April ?

Place plants in the ground at the same level as the dirt in pot.

Water.

Lightly mulch (compost, leaves, straw, grass clippings, arborist wood chips) to control weeds and maintain soil moisture.

Label.

Maintain your garden:

Through watering followed by a period of drying .

Fertilize 1/4-1/2 the recommended amount of nitrogen for vegetable in your area????

Reapply after heavy harvests.

Consider using compost, manures, fish emulsion and kelp meal

Watch out for pests! aphids-avoid overcrowding plants, spider mites-thrive in dry conditions-control by spraying with plain water at regular interval

The essential oils in herbs often help to repel most pests!!!

Maintain a healthy garden-water close to the ground or use soaker hose, remove weak or infested growth, prune regularly

Harvest Time:

Best to harvest in the morning, just after the dew has dried, but before the sun gets too hot.

If you're planning on drying, cut just before plants bloom to insure the highest concentration of essential oils.

Cut just above the first joint of tender growth. (woody stems?)

Perennial herbs can have half of their foliage pruned back. Stop making large harvests late summer or fall.

If plants are experiencing drought, do not cut back until the stress has passed.

Drying:

Spray with garden hose the day before cutting.

Harvest in the morning after dew has dried.

Remove dry and dead leaves, bundle, label and hang upside down in a well-ventilated, darkened room.

They are dry when they crumble into a powder in your hands.

Store whole leaves in airtight preferably dark containers in a cool-to-temperate place out of direct sunlight.

Crush the herb when adding to cooking.

1 Tablespoon of finely cut fresh herbs = 1 teaspoon of crumbled herbs = 1/4-1/2 teaspoon of ground herbs

Leafy herbs will store 3 months to 2 years.

Other methods of preserving:

Freezing-not pretty

finely chop herbs, place in ice cube tray-cover with olive oil or stock, freeze, pop out of tray and store in plastic zip bags

Herb Lawns:

Replace some or all of you lawn. Start small and work up.

Roman chamomile, perennial variety-full sun, feathery foliage

creeping thyme-loves sunny, sandy location, fills in crack and crevices, stands up to being walked on

Wild marjoram, pennyroyal,

What to do in the Winter:

Consider potting up the annuals and bringing them indoors.

Take cuttings of herbs that have gotten too big.

Share with friends what you do not have room for.

Make body products and crafts with your dried herbs.