

Herbs: Back to the Basics

Let's Get Growing 2021

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Section I. Growing

General rules of thumb:

- Full sun (6-8 hours a day)
- Average soil conditions
- Average moisture
- Do not let flower (clip off flower heads)
- Do not overfertilize (a little is ok)
- Do not overwater (let dry out between watering)
- If seeding, put two seeds per pot (increases your germination rate)

Section II. Harvesting

- In morning when dew has dried
- Before plant flowers
- Once plant is 6 inches tall
- If cut it all, leave two inches to regenerate
- Short life cycle vs perennial makes difference
- If storing seed, store it in cool, dark place (coin envelopes)

Section III. Preserving

Hanging Method

- Tie in bunches and hang in dry, warm place
- No direct sun
- Two or three stems at a time—air circulation is key to drying
- Thyme or anything with tiny leaves you can put into a paper lunch bag and dry inside (don't overfill)
- Usually takes a couple of weeks—not done until leaves are crisp—if they are still flexible, they are not done
- Store in jars if you crumble the leaves, or plastic bags—keep with your other herbs (dark place)
- Shelf life—best used within the year

Freezing Method

- Wash, clean, dry and freeze in plastic bags or containers
- For pestos or slurries, use ice cube trays
- Make a base (slurry) of almost anything
- Ratio 4:1 (2 cups leaves:1/2 cup oil)
- Best herbs to freeze: Basil, Tarragon, Fennel, Chervil, Parsley, Chives

Section IV. Must-Have Herbs

Basil

- Many families, related to mint
- Great planted with tomatoes (companion planting)
- Lots of water, but do not overwater
- Away from strong winds
- Basil's Greek name basileus, meaning 'king', indicates its royal position among herbs. The basil has always attracted the attention of herb fanciers, and rightly so, for they offer an amazing array of flavours and scents, and they are a constant source of inspiration in the kitchen.

Chives

- Flowers & Stems edible
- Continually trim (to 2") several times during the summer or even more frequently as needed
- The most delicate member of the onion family. Chopped leaves offer great improvement to salads, soups, vegetables, omelettes, and cheese dishes. Essential kitchen herb! Palatable as it is to humans, nasty insects stay away in droves from it and neighbouring plants.

Dill

- Pick when young
- Flowers used in dried arrangements
- Best known as an ingredient in dill pickles, but there are few dishes from sauerkraut to apple pie to which the seeds would not add interest. Chopped leaves have rare affinity for sour cream and cucumbers.

Marjoram

- 'Kissing cousin' to Oregano

- Leaves add strong, spicy flavour to soups, sauces, stuffings, stews. Rubbing with fresh leaves before roasting improves all strong meats. Adds special flavour to sausages and meatloaf. A must in German potato soup.

Mint

- Can tolerate part shade
- Invasive--grow in container, or a five-gallon container collar sunk into ground
- Very large family--varieties seem endless. Most are semi-zone hardy, so sheltered location best. Chocolate, pineapple, apple, not to mention spearmint and peppermint
- There are many varieties with multitudes of uses in the kitchen, in commerce and in medicine. Mints don't require much of a green thumb to grow. Grow indoors or out, in full or partial sun.

Oregano

- Marjoram 'kissing cousin'
- Use leaves, flavor intensifies after flowering
- The pizza herb. Indispensable in Italian, Spanish and Mexican cookery. Hot, spicy flavour complements almost all tomato dishes. Desirable in beef or lamb stew, gravies, soups, salads or casseroles.

Parsley

- Typically grown as an annual
- Great source of vitamin C
- Cut off branches back to base of plant, from outer first
- Italian varieties preferred flavor for cooking
- Parsley cannot be surpassed for its versatility in the kitchen. It underlines the flavour of foods without being dominant, and compliments almost every dish. Fresh green appearance and fragrant aroma delight the eye and stimulate the appetite.

Rosemary

- Can tolerate some frost
- Grown as an annual in Minnesota
- Can overwinter, however, very finicky about situation--no drafts, and moisture level should be constant, but allow to dry out between waterings
- Usually propagated from cuttings, however, if seeding, use primed seed (Johnny's Seeds), as germination rate is very poor

Sage

- Large family (salvia)
- Great landscaping plant, however, winter hardiness after a few years might be suspect
- The old proverb, 'Why should a man die whilst sage grows in his garden?' attests to great medicinal repute once held by sage. Best known today is garden sage, the flavouring variety appreciated in cuisines throughout the world.

Summer Savory

- Great pepper substitute
- Self-seeds like dill
- Often called the bean herbs because of the compelling character they add to a dish whose base is peas, beans or lentils. Also excellent in chilled vegetable juices and meatloaf.

Thyme

- Zone 3 (Hardy for Minnesota)
- Great landscaping plant, especially 'steppables'
- Aromatic low growing bush or creeping herbs, ideal for rockeries, borders, or along pathways. Pretty pink or purple blossoms are a favourite of honeybees. Culinary and medicinal value. Grow indoors or out in full sun.

Section V. Using

General Guidelines

- Try to use at end of cooking cycle (heat destroys lots of flavor and nutrients)
- Ratio of Fresh v. Dried: 3:1 or 1 Tablespoon : 1 Teaspoon
- Butters

1 stick butter: 1tablespoon fresh herbs

- Oils

Wash and dry your choice of herb branches and lightly bruise them to release flavor. Place them in a clean decorative glass container, cover with warmed oil, and seal tightly. Leave in a cool, dark place to infuse about two weeks. Taste. If not strong enough, add more fresh herbs and let stand another week. You can either strain the oil or leave the herbs in. If you do not strain the herbs out, the flavor will become stronger as it stands, so keep that in mind.
www.about.com

- Vinegars

Heated, cold, or solar -- <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/SP401-B.pdf>

Brewing Herbal Teas

Pour boiling water over tea herbs: Use 1 cup of boiling water to 1 teaspoon dry or 1 tablespoon fresh herbs per cup. If making in a pot, add an extra teaspoon or tablespoon (if using fresh) – this is called “one for the pot”. Cover to prevent aromatic steam from escaping. Let steep for 3-5 minutes. Don’t steep longer because the tea will have a bitter flavor. If you want a stronger flavor, add more herbs. To sweeten herbal tea: A natural herb, like Stevia, or honey.

Good combinations to try:

Sage and lemon verbena

Rosemary and lavender

Thyme (3 parts), rosemary and spearmint (1 part each)

Chamomile flowers, rose petals and spearmint (one part each) with lemon verbena (2 parts).

Lavender: Use flower buds

Lemon Balm: Use leaves

Chamomile: Use flowers

Sage: Use leaves

Mints: Use leaves

Herb Blends

Herbes de Provence Classic: Bay leaf, thyme, rosemary, chervil, oregano, summer savory, tarragon, and marjoram. Variations: Lavender, Fennel, Mint

Fines Herbes Classic: equal parts tarragon, chervil, parsley and chives.

Variations: coriander, lovage, thyme, marjoram, basil, cress, dill

Bouquet Garni Classic: sprigs of parsley and thyme and a [bay leaf](#), tied together if fresh or wrapped in cheesecloth if dried. Celery, garlic, fennel, orange peel, and marjoram are common additions.

RECIPES

Cilantro Pesto

- ❖ 2 cups Packed fresh cilantro leaves, washed & dried
- ❖ 2-4 cloves Garlic, peeled
- ❖ ½ tsp Sea salt
- ❖ ¼ cup Pine nuts, toasted
- ❖ ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- ❖ ¼ -1/2 cup Extra virgin olive oil

Directions:

1. Place cilantro leaves in food processor. Pulse until well-chopped.
2. Add garlic, salt pine nuts and cheese and blend well.
3. Add olive oil in a slow drizzle.

Makes 1 cup

Dill Pesto

- ❖ 1 cup fresh dill
- ❖ ½ cup fresh parsley
- ❖ ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- ❖ ¼ cup almonds, toasted
- ❖ 2 cloves garlic
- ❖ ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ❖ ½ tsp sea salt
- ❖ 1 cup Swiss cheese, grated

Directions:

1. Combine dill and next 5 ingredients in food processor or blender. Process until coarsely pureed.
2. Add cheese and process until well mixed. Add olive oil if consistency is too thick.

Makes 1 ½ cups

Ginger Syrup

- ❖ 2 cups sugar
- ❖ 2 cups water
- ❖ 2 cups fresh ginger, peeled and sliced into 1/8" pieces

Directions:

1. Combine in medium saucepan, and bring to a boil over high heat.

2. Reduce heat and simmer until syrupy and reduced by half. Syrup should hold a line of a plate. Strain ginger pieces out and reserve syrup.

(Toss dried ginger in sugar, bake at 200 degrees until dried thru, about 4 hours, and you have made ginger candy.)

Yield: 6-8 servings

Herbed Honey Butter

- ❖ 1 Tbsp fresh parsley
- ❖ 1 Tbsp fresh basil
- ❖ 1 Tbsp fresh Lemon Balm
- ❖ 1 lb butter, room temperature
- ❖ 2 Tbsp honey

Directions

1. Mince the herbs as fine as possible and add to the butter, then mix in the honey.
2. (You can use whatever herbs you like--the original recipe called for only the parsley & basil and I added the lemon balm)

*This does need to stay refrigerated and used within a week.

Iced Mint Tea

- ❖ 9 cups water, divided
- ❖ 12 large sprigs of spearmint
- ❖ 4 ¼ ounce tea bags
- ❖ 1 cup orange juice
- ❖ ¼ cup lemon juice
- ❖ 1 cup sugar

Directions:

1. Bring 3 cups water to a boil. Remove from heat and add mint and tea bags. Cool and strain.
2. Combine orange juice, lemon juice, sugar and remaining 6 cups water. Stir to dissolve.

Yield: 6-8 servings

Lavender Faerie Cookies

- ❖ ½ cup butter
- ❖ 1 cup sugar
- ❖ 2 eggs

- ❖ ½ tsp vanilla
- ❖ 1 Tbsp fresh lavender flowers, finely chopped
- ❖ 1 ½ cup flour
- ❖ 2 tsp baking powder

Directions:

1. Cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs, vanilla and lavender flowers. Stir in flour and baking powder until well blended.
2. Drop by half teaspoons on an ungreased baking sheet.
3. Bake at 375 for 6-8 min. Cool slightly on baking sheet before transferring to cooling rack.

Yield: 3-4 dozen

Lemon Balm Cookies

- ❖ 2 Tbsp Lemon balm leaves, minced
- ❖ 1 tsp lemon juice
- ❖ 1 cup butter, softened
- ❖ 2/3 cup sugar
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ 2 1/3 cup flour

Directions:

1. In small dish, combine first 2 ingredients. Press mixture w/back of spoon to blend.
2. In large mixer bowl, cream butter and sugar.
3. Beat in egg and lemon mixture.
4. Gradually beat in flour and salt.
5. Cover and refrigerate 3 hours or until firm.
6. Roll in wax paper.
7. Preheat oven to 350. On wax paper, slice into slices 1/8" thick. Bake 8-10 min on ungreased cookie sheets.

Rosemary Nuts

- ❖ 2 ¼ cups (18 oz) assorted unsalted nuts, including peeled peanuts, cashews, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans and whole unpeeled almonds
- ❖ 2 Tbsp fresh rosemary leaves, coarsely chopped
- ❖ ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- ❖ 2 tsp dark brown sugar
- ❖ 2 tsp sea salt
- ❖ 1 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

2. Spread nuts out on baking sheet. Toast in oven until light golden brown, about 10 minutes.
3. In large bowl, combine rosemary, cayenne, sugar, salt and melted butter.
4. Thoroughly toss toasted nuts in spiced butter and serve warm.

Rosemary Lemon Cookies

- ❖ 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- ❖ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- ❖ 2 tsp fresh rosemary, snipped
- ❖ 2 tsp lemon peel, finely shredded
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
- ❖ $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- ❖ 1 tsp vanilla
- ❖ $2\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lemon curd
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mascarpone cheese
- ❖ 1 Tbsp powdered sugar (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper; set aside.
2. In large bowl, beat butter with electric mixer on medium speed for 30 seconds.
3. Add granulated sugar, rosemary, lemon peel, baking powder, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping side of bowl occasionally. Beat in vanilla until combined.
4. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Using a wooden spoon, stir in any remaining flour.
5. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. With the bottom of glass dipped in granulated sugar, flatten each ball to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness.
6. Bake about 8 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Cool on cookie sheets for a couple of minutes before transferring to wire racks.

Zucchini Basil Muffins

- ❖ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- ❖ $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
- ❖ 1 tsp baking powder
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper
- ❖ 2 Tbsp vegetable shortening
- ❖ 1 Tbsp sugar
- ❖ 1 egg
- ❖ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup buttermilk
- ❖ 1 cup zucchini squash, coarsely grated
- ❖ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh basil, finely chopped
- ❖ 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, softened

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, salt, bkg soda, bkg powder and pepper; set aside.
3. In a bowl cream together shortening and sugar; beat in the egg and buttermilk. Beat until mixture is well-combined. Stir in zucchini and basil. Add flour mixture to zucchini mixture, stirring until just combined.
4. Spoon mixture into a well-greased mini muffin tin (each 1/8 cup).
5. Bake the muffins on the middle rack of oven approximately 15 to 18 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean.
6. Remove from oven and turn the muffins out on a wire rack and let them cool.

Tarragon Mustard

- 2 t dried tarragon, divided
- 1/4 c mustard seed
- 1/4 c dry white wine
- 1/3 c white wine vinegar
- 1/3 c water
- 1/8 t black pepper
- 1/8 t allspice
- 2 t honey
- 1 t salt

Mix together 1 teaspoon tarragon and next 3 ingredients. Let stand 3 hours. Combine mixture w/water and next 4 ingredients in a food processor or blender and puree. Transfer mixture to the top of a double boiler. Stir over simmering water 10 minutes or until thickened. Cool. Mix in remaining 1 teaspoon tarragon. Place in a jar, cover, and refrigerate.

Pesto Mayo

- 1 c mayonnaise
- 2-4 T pesto, or to taste

Mix. Store in refrigerator.

Chimichurri

- 1/4 c olive oil
- 2/3 c sherry vinegar
- 3/4 c fresh parsley, chopped

3 T fresh oregano, chopped

3 T fresh lemon juice

6 cloves garlic, chopped

Parsley Salad

1 c fresh parsley, chopped (heaping cup)

4-5 small sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained

4-5 shavings fresh parmesan cheese

Balsamic vinaigrette

Toss all ingredients together.