BACKYARD FARMING

Make your home a homestead

GROWING HERBS FOR FOOD & MEDICINE

"EXPERT ADVICE MADE EASY"

Kim Pezza

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INTRODUCTION

When I first got my start in small scale farming, I really wasn't even "farming". Three Americana chickens and a small herb garden—that was all I had, and it seemed like enough for me.

Little did I know that those humble beginnings would someday take the form of an entire lifestyle!

Still, I didn't jump into things with both feet. I tried to stay practical; my first garden, I decided, would be a combination herb garden. I wasn't a fan of the idea of putting time and money into flowers that I could do nothing but look at, and was adamant that any plants I grew would be useful, not just "pretty". If I couldn't eat it, cook with it, use it medicinally, or work it into the arts and crafts that I sold, it didn't belong in my garden.

Fast forward to today, and not much has changed. There are a few more "pretty" plants than before, but they're there to help attract butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects to the garden. Functional as well as fun, right?

And my preference for the practical in choosing what to plant in my herb garden puts me in good company. For thousands of years, herbs have been used for both medicinal and culinary needs, with medicinal purposes having been the focus for the majority of human history. Some were believed to have magical properties, capable of protecting the household from everything from evil witches to malevolent spirits. From the Bible to Homer to William Shakespeare, the use of herbs is commonplace, widely accepted and, in many cases, essential for daily life. And although the uses of many herbs may have changed, we can still find many uses still in play today, just as they were centuries ago, both medicinally and culinarily.

It stands to reason, then, that growing herbs is relatively simple, especially in the modern day. They can be grown in a garden in your yard, or in a few pots on the countertop. They're great for someone who's interested in trying some edibles, but who doesn't feel quite ready to tackle vegetables. They can stand in gardens of their own, be mixed into the

general landscape, or become companion plants. If you live in the right areas, some herbs can even be found growing wild in fields, near marshes, on roadsides, or in the mountains. And “the right area” doesn’t necessarily mean a rural area—you would be surprised at what can be found in suburban areas, empty lots (ask permission first!) and in your own yard.

This primer will serve to give you the basics of what you need to start learning about using herbs for medicinal, culinary and other needs. It is strongly advised that before you use any herb or plant for medicinal needs, you check with your doctor. If you are on other medications, you could suffer from adverse effects, some of which could potentially be deadly. Keep in mind that although these are plants, many of today’s medications are still derived from them, and that mixing medications is always something to be done carefully and with proper understanding.

As you read this book, I hope it will inspire you to further explore the growing, keeping, and use of herbs, and to start making decisions as to which herbs you want to begin with or how you want to use them. So, sit back with your favorite beverage—might I recommend an herbal tea—and enjoy your journey into the world of herbs!

MEET THE EXPERT

Kim Pezza grew up among orchards, muck land, dairy and beef farms, having lived most of her life in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. She has raised pigs, poultry and game birds, rabbits and goats, and is experienced in growing herbs and vegetables. In her spare time, Kim teaches workshops in a variety of areas, from art to making herb butter, oils and vinegars. She continues to learn new techniques and skills and now spends time between her grandparent's mid-1800's farm in New York and in Southwest Florida, the first and oldest cattle area in America and origin of the American cowboy.

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HERB USE

The history of herb use has its start in the constant pursuit of medical knowledge unique to the human race. When and how humans first realized that herbs could be both medicinal and edible remains unknown. Did they learn from the animals, watching what they ate when they were ill or hungry? Was it trial and error? Or did it come down to natural instinct?

While we may never know exactly how humans *discovered* the use of herbs, we do have a fairly detailed history of how they were *used*.

That said, the use of herbs goes back further than written history itself. Archaeological findings have shown evidence of their use back to the Paleolithic times, more than 60,000 years ago. Burial sites that have been uncovered show that these hunter/ gatherers may have had the knowledge to use herbs for medicinal purposes.

The *Eber Papyrus*, written by the ancient Egyptians around 1500 BCE, actually listed about 850 plants as medicine, many that we would recognize and still use today. It also shows the herbs and spices that were used at the time for culinary purposes, which are equally as familiar. Later, in the sixth century BCE, came the *Sushruta Samhita*, a writing that describes over 700 medicinal plants. In China, the *Shennong Ben CaoJing* listed over 360 plants and their medicinal uses.

Hippocrates, considered the father of modern medicine, was well known for using herbal remedies in his medical practice.

Hippocrates authored the *Hippocratic Corpus*, a collection of remedies and their recipes. Some 400 years later, Pliny the Elder wrote *Natural History*, considered to be one of—if not *the*—first encyclopedia. Not only

was it a guide to nature, it was also an extensive inventory of those herbs that were considered valuable for medicine.

The Middle Ages saw Benedictine monasteries become the center of medicinal herb studies. Within their walls, herbs were grown, studied, and used in treatment. At the same time, the monks were also translating and transcribing the herbal works of the ancient Greeks and Romans, ensuring that none of their ancient medical knowledge became lost to the ages. Meanwhile, folk medicines continued to be used in the home and spread through the work of the wise women (and sometimes wise men), who would prescribe herbal remedies, sometimes with an accompanying spell or divination—an early version of the placebo effect.

The periods between the 15th and 17th centuries became known as the "Great Age of Herbals or Herbalism," with books from that time period just now becoming widely available in English (the first known being the *Grete Herball of 1526*). Perhaps one of the most famous herbal authors of the time, whose books you can still find today, was Nicholas Culpeper, an herbalist, astrologer, botanist and physician. His best-known book of the period was *The English Physician Enlarged*.

The 17th century saw the Black Death take hold in Europe, claiming millions of lives as the medication of the time proved completely ineffective. This marked the start of a slow decline in the dependence on plants for medicinal use, as students of medicine began to seek more effective treatments and surgeries.

Yet the enduring legacy of herbal medicine continued, particularly in the New World. 18th century America saw a great dependence on herbal medicines, as physicians were not available to everyone in the country. Native Americans had also shared their knowledge of herbal medication and preparations with the colonists, leading to more effective treatments.

Fast forward to the modern era, and pharmacology has largely taken over. Herbal medicine is now pushed to the side as being “alternative” medicine. This change in thinking began at the start of the last century when, in 1904, the American Medical Association (AMA) set standardizations for teaching medicine, forcing many schools that couldn’t meet these tough standards to fold. From about 1910 to the mid-1930s, more than half of these schools either merged with larger universities or were completely closed down. The schools that were left were forced to discontinue their “alternative medicine” programs, which included herbal medicine.

Currently, things seem to be coming full circle, as more people embrace herbs for medicinal use, with some going as far as using only herbals until it is absolutely necessary to turn to modern medicine. Others have found a way to make traditional medicine and modern medicine work together in unison. The use of herbals has once again found its way back into many households, medical practices, and educational programs—not to mention the kitchen!

That’s the history lesson out of the way. Now that we understand where all these wonderful herbs have come from, how do we go about making them a part of our home gardens?

CHAPTER 2

HERBS IN THE HOME

Fifty years ago, someone keeping and tending an herb garden wasn't unheard of, but it certainly wasn't commonplace (outside of some rural areas, where they still depended on herbs as medication). But today, home herb gardens are seen not only on the homestead, but in suburban and/ or city yards, on rooftops, and even on kitchen countertops.

Resources available to the home grower have become more abundant as well, with access to multiple sources for seeds or seedling plants. Cuttings and divisions from mature plants can be obtained from friends who also grow herbs, or from certain farmers and farm markets. And it's not just growers who are enjoying a new renaissance: the number of opportunities for safe foraging in pesticide-free areas has also noticeably increased.

In this chapter, we will take a brief look at the variety of gardening methods available to the home grower looking to get started in herb cultivation. We'll also take a look at the pros and cons of starting with

seeds, cuttings, divisions or plants, as well as touch on the art of foraging for both medicinal and culinary plants.

There's a lot to discuss, and it might seem overwhelming to first-timers. So let's start with something easy. What do *you* want from your garden?

Laying the Gardening Groundwork

The first thing to decide when getting into herbs is, what type of garden or gardens do I want? Obviously, this decision will have the largest influence on what type of plants you can grow, and what you can use them for. Are you planning to use the plants for medicinal purposes? Will you be using them to prepare food, or to make dye? Or are you looking for mixed use, to keep your options open? Is it important to you that your plants be perennials, so that you don't have to put in a new garden each year? (Keep in mind that deciding to install an all-perennial garden will limit the types plants that you will be able to select from, as certain tender perennials still may not make it through a hard winter.)

You will also need to keep your available space and planting zone in mind, although this isn't nearly as limiting as it may sound: if you're willing to plant herbs that do not do well in cold weather in containers, for example, you can bring them indoors during the winter. But whatever you decide, keep in mind how much space you actually have to devote to your garden. If you are limited in space, you may want to focus on those plants you will actually need, i.e. those that directly fulfill your gardening goals.

When working with limited space, you will need to learn to make focused decisions. For example, regardless of what you may decide, as far as what you *want* in your garden, if a plant doesn't do what you expected it would, or you don't use it as you thought, the plant should be replaced the following year with something else. If you have a lot of garden space at your disposal, obviously there's no need to rush the unwanted plant out the door; but for those of us whose space is at a premium, experimenting to find the most efficient line-up is the way to go.

Once you have decided what types of herbs you want to begin with, it is time to decide on a style of garden. This will be partially dictated by the herbs you have decided to start with, as well as the amount of space that you have at your disposal.

At this point, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you want a single garden for a variety of uses?
- Are you looking for multiple gardens, with each garden having a specific use?
- Are you interested in putting together a theme garden?
- Are you planning to fit herbs in and amongst your existing landscape plants, because you're tight on space?
- Do you have no garden space at all, and will therefore be growing in containers?

Keep in mind as you go along that, even after a garden is already in and planted, some changes can always be made. That doesn't mean you can move forward without proper planning, however; remember that when it comes time to make changes, some plants do not transplant well and will need to either stay where they are or be discarded. These types of plants should be noted, as they will provide an additional challenge should you need to make sudden alterations to your gardening set-up.

Types of Herb Gardens

When deciding on the type (or types) of herb garden that you want to install, you may find an unexpectedly large number of options available to you. For example, the **kitchen garden** is a popular choice. Traditionally planted closest to the kitchen, kitchen gardens aren't awfully big, and consist mostly of the herbs used the most in cooking. They are also conveniently located so that you can step out the door and gather what you need for a meal (or for medicine, as a sort of natural first aid kit).

If you are a fiber person and a spinner, then you will likely want a **dyer's garden**. As such, you'll be planting herbs that you will use to color your spun wool or to weave together. (Don't forget that many plants used for

dyes also have medicinal and/or culinary uses, so a dyer's garden can easily become multi-purpose with just a few minor additions.) However, if you want to make sure that you have plenty of plant material for your dyes, and you have the space, it would be best to have a garden dedicated to dye plants.

The **medicinal garden** is an herb garden dedicated to herbs that can be used medicinally. As many medicinal herbs also have a culinary use, you might not want (or need) a standalone medicinal garden. However, if you are certain your primary use for the herbs you grow will be for medical purposes, having a medicinal garden that consists only of herbs that are curative, with no culinary value, may be the way to go.

If you have no interest in either the medicinal or dyer's gardens, then what you are most likely after is a simple, traditional **culinary garden**, consisting purely of herbs for cooking needs. Again, size will be dictated by your wants and needs, as well as how much space you have at your disposal. This garden would be filled herbs that are fit to eat, whether for cooking, salads or simply for garnish. (The kitchen garden would also fit under the description of a traditional culinary garden.)

If you're not sure what you want at this stage, you can always create a **mixed herb garden**. These are combination gardens, with culinary/medicinal, medicinal/dye, and culinary/dye being common options. This is the ideal choice for the beginner looking to "try a little bit of everything" at the start, or for the gardener who has limited space. Alternatively, a mixed herb garden can be for the veteran gardener who knows exactly what they need, focused around certain "must have" herbs like basil, chives, lavender, oregano, parsley, mint, rosemary, sage, and tarragon.

Gardening Layouts

There are a few options open to the new herb gardener who truly has very limited space or no yard space at all. The first and best option is the **container garden**. Container gardening, if you're not already familiar, is much as it sounds: planting herbs in containers. These containers can be as small as single pots, or as large as the large metal livestock water troughs that you can find at most any feed store. You can even plant a small container garden and then set it in your driveway, if that is the only space you have. Feel free to get creative in the containers you plan to use; just make sure that your containers have drainage holes in them (and if they don't, know that you'll need to put them in). Also, be sure that the container's material isn't one that will be toxic to your plants.

Making Good Soil

A number of the herbs we'll be discussing in this book can be grown in a container, so long as the pot has good drainage (so that the plant doesn't drown or create root rot) and includes **good soil**. Although soil and mixes can be purchased, there is always the option of mixing your own. It's really quite easy; you can even make soil-based and soilless mixes:

Soil Based Mix

1 part soil (high quality)
1 part peat moss
1 part perlite or vermiculite
1 part compost (optional but recommended)

Mix thoroughly. Add fertilizer of choice if necessary.

Soilless Mix

1 part #2 grade vermiculite
1 part peat moss

Mix thoroughly. Add fertilizer of choice.

If you already have landscaping and just can't find a place to put another garden, you can plant your chosen herbs within your existing landscape. In other words, instead of having a discrete herb garden as such, the herbs will be another part of your landscaping. This option can make your landscaping both interesting and functional; however, you will need to make sure that your herbs are compatible with the landscaping plants they'll be planted with. This isn't difficult; you can check compatibility online, hit the library in the gardening section, or even check with your local greenhouse.

If you really want to have some fun, and you have the space, you can plant a **theme garden**. Examples of themed herb gardens would be a pizza garden, where you plant all the herbs that go into your pizza (such as oregano, basil, garlic); you can plant a tea garden, where everything you grow is something that you can make tea from; or, if crafting is your thing, you can have a garden of herbs that you like to craft with. Maybe history is your passion; if so, you can focus your theme garden on those herbs that were most used during the historic time period of your choice!

As you can see, no matter what your situation is—even if you have no land to work with—there are options available to you to grow the herbs you want. You can be as traditional or as offbeat and fun as you want with your new herb garden. The main thing is to have fun developing it!

Seeds or Plants?

Once you've decided on the kinds of herbs that you want to grow and the type of garden that you'll be putting them in, the next step will be to decide how to start your garden. You might think it's as straightforward as buying a packet of seeds and a bag of soil, but there's a lot more to it. Seeds, cuttings, divisions or plants—each provides a uniquely distinct method of starting a new garden.

Seeds

Many *do* choose to start from seeds. It is the least expensive option and offers the largest selection of easily available herbs. For many herb gardeners, this alone makes seeds the best option; there are dozens of mail order companies where you can find herbs both familiar and unheard of, available from local and foreign sources.

However, there are a few things that you need to consider when going the seed route. When starting plants from seed, you'll need to bear in mind how long those seeds take to sprout. If you are in an area where there are no harsh winters this won't be an issue; however, if you live in an area with mild or harsh winters, depending on how long it will take the seed to sprout, you may need to start them indoors first, then transplant them outdoors (especially if it is an annual, although annuals do tend to grow faster than perennials).

Most seeds need the ground temperature to be at a certain point, with no risk of frost, in order to begin to sprout. Depending on how long it takes a seed to sprout after planting, or if your spring/summer seasons are short, you might not be able to sow directly into the ground and still have enough time to get a decent harvest. While this isn't a huge problem with perennials

as they will come back the following year (although you might have to wait a year after planting in order to have a plant big enough to get a decent harvest), if you are growing annuals, the life of that plant is limited to the time frame of that season. Depending on that time frame, your herbs might not have enough time to mature if planted directly into the ground.

In these situations, the solution is to start the seeds indoors, which thankfully is quite easy. All you need is something to plant to your seeds in, whether it's an inexpensive mini-greenhouse (available at most gardening stores) or something as simple as a paper egg carton. (These work great: just fill each holder with a seed-starting soil, then plant one seed per cell and care for them you would any other seed. I recommend paper, as the cartons can then be cut apart, and each cell can be planted into the ground, enabling minimal disruption and transplant shock to the seedling.) Remember, starting your seeds indoors is *not* an expensive proposition, and you can even practice "recycle and reuse" with your growing containers.

Plants

Another option when starting your garden would be to purchase plants that have already begun growing. Although this is probably the easiest option, it is also the most expensive and will limit you to only those plants that you can find in your area (unless you can find a good mail order company that sells and ships them). Purchasing started plants will give you a head start on seed growers, as well as the immediate satisfaction of having a sprouted garden to look at, but again, if you are on a tight budget, this may not be the right option for you.

Cuttings and Divisions

Starting from seeds or from plants are the standard options for new gardeners and backyard farmers. However, there is also the choice of starting from cuttings or divisions, which are great options—*if* you have friends or family with herb gardens that are willing to share. **Cuttings** refers to taking a piece of a plant and rooting it to create another plant. Rooting a plant means to take a cutting and place it in either water or soil and wait for new roots to form, so what was once a piece of the original plant becomes a separate plant. Not all plants can root, but many can; examples of plants that can root from cuttings are mints and berry plants. Growing plants from

cuttings is a rather simple method, though sometimes the cuttings will need quite a bit of attention before they take.

The other option is growing from **divisions**. When some plants get too big, the healthy thing to do is to dig them up and split them apart. You might split the plant in half, into thirds, or just take a small section. (The difference between cuttings and divisions is that divisions will have their roots attached, if done properly.) The division is then replanted and will begin to grow again. Keep in mind that if a division has no roots, it will be no good; divisions need a good portion of their roots intact on their separated pieces if you want to start an entirely new plant with them. Once you have the divisions, they can (and should) be planted right away, either directly into the ground (as long as you have the right weather) or potted in a container, to be placed in the ground at a later date.

Foraging

Some of your herbal needs can be fulfilled without going to the trouble of planting a garden at all! Foraging, or gathering the leaves and flowers that you need from the wild, can provide homesteaders with the opportunity to harvest limited quantities of certain herbs they'd prefer not to grow themselves. There is a lot that you can find through foraging—it is mind boggling how many things in your own yard can be edible. Foraging for the herbs that you need lets you forgo tending those plants in a garden, freeing up more space for other plants.

Before you decide to go the foraging route, there are some major considerations to keep in mind. When you forage from the wild, it is *imperative* that you know what you're doing, what is safe to harvest and what isn't, and what is legal to harvest (as some plants may be restricted or

altogether protected). You'll also need to be sure that you are practicing sustainable harvesting. You never want to clean out an entire area, nor do you want to damage plants to the point that they will not be able to survive. It doesn't do you, the environment or your future herb needs any good to wipe out an entire source with one careless harvest.

When foraging, make sure that you're harvesting from legally allowed areas. If you're on private property that isn't your own, you'll need to ask permission. Chances are, if you explain what you are doing and demonstrate you will be harvesting carefully, you'll get permission. If you don't receive permission, just move on. Many state and federal lands may also prohibit foraging, so always check out the rules and regulations first.

And, since it needs to be said again and again, *be sure you know what you are picking*! There are plenty of poisonous plants that look similar to non-poisonous and edible plants. If you harvest from the wrong plants, not only could it make you and anyone else who may consume the herb sick, or irritate the skin if used externally, it could also prove deadly. It isn't good enough to "think" that you know what you're picking, or to be "pretty sure" that you have the correct plant. You have to *know* that what you are gathering is safe.

If you want to begin foraging but don't know the plants in your area, look for classes, especially those that will take you out foraging so that you can see what some of these plants look like in the wild. Many schools and colleges offer adult education programs of all kinds, and nature centers will sometimes offer classes either on foraging or about using wild plants. Try looking for someone in your area who forages and ask if they would consider teaching you. It also helps to have a good guidebook to edible wild plants with you when you forage, with detailed descriptions and clear photographs wherever possible (preferred over paintings and drawings). Regardless, until you have some personal knowledge of the plants in your area under your belt, foraging should be done with preparation and caution.


Dill
Mint
Oregano
Rosemary
Basil
Parsley
Tarragon
Thyme
Savory
Bay
leaves

CHAPTER 3

CATALOG OF HERBS

The following is a sample list of herbs that make for a great part of any grower's garden (and in some cases, your foraging list). This catalogue is nowhere near a complete list; it is meant to give you an idea of what herbs you can plant and how they might be used, whether medicinally, culinarily, or both. It is meant to be a primer, a starting point for your journey into the world of herbs.

Aloe Vera

Also known as "true aloe" and "burn plant", aloe is a well-known medicinal plant with historical uses well documented throughout the ages.

Today, aloe is still used externally for wounds, to help clear blemishes, acne, oily skin and dandruff, and to keep skin healthy. It is thought that aloe may even have an anti-aging effect on the skin, increasing collagen production and improving the skin's elasticity. The juice may also be used to ease digestive discomfort. Depending on the severity, aloe gel is also used for burns, to soothe the itching and burning sensations while promoting tissue regeneration and healing. Sometimes, the use of aloe can help prevent scarring or off-color pigmentation after a burn has healed.

The aloe plant may grow up to 2 feet high, although the flower stalks may reach 3–4 feet in height. Most plants are stemless with thick fleshy leaves (the medicinal part of the plant) at ground level. The flower is tubular and may be any variety of colors; the aloe itself can also vary in color, from a bright green to a spotted/ mottled leaf.

Aloe is very easy to propagate from the offshoots or “babies” that spring from them. If the plant is kept indoors, it is safe to remove the “baby” when it is about 2 inches high (6–8 inches if outdoors). The plants need sun and good drainage, and enough watering to keep their all-important leaves healthy.

Aloe may be used fresh from a broken leaf, in a purchased gel, or added to lotions and creams. The first and best way to use aloe would be directly from the plant, with the next best being as a purchased, pure (98 percent or above) gel. For an extra boost, keep the gel refrigerated and use cold for an extra soothing experience.

Angelica

Known as European Angelica or Garden Angelica, it is also called the “herb of the angels”. A sweet member of the parsley family with medicinal, culinary and dye uses, Angelica is native to temperate and subarctic regions of the northern hemisphere. Angelica is found both wild and cultivated as far north as Greenland, Iceland and Lapland, and is also cultivated in the United States.

Growing to 6 feet tall, Angelica is a pale green plant with celery-like stalks and a similar scent. Angelica flowers are white or green and globe-shaped with a compound umbel, are 2–6 inches across, and has oblong fruit with two yellow winged seeds.

Angelica seedlings grow slowly in the first year and will usually not flower until their second year. The third year, when the plant goes to seed

and then dies, marks the end of one “cycle” for the plant. (It might be worth noting that once any annual goes to seed, that is the end of the plant unless you clip the flower heads before they go to seed. Doing so will extend their life for a bit.)

Propagation of Angelica is best done by seed. Gather the seeds when ripe by taking the entire seed head after the dew has dried. Lay the seed head on a cloth in a warm spot with good air circulation. Allow 7–10 days to dry. The seeds will easily shake out of their pod when ready. Store the seeds in an airtight container and keep cool. The seeds may be refrigerated for up to one year.

Angelica is used for both culinary and medicinal needs. For culinary needs, the flavor is found in the leaves, stem, seeds and root and may be used fresh or dry. It may be used in soups, salads, stews, or as garnishes and teas. The ground root may be used in muffins and breads, cookies and cakes, while the stems are made into candy. Angelica is also used as a flavoring for Benedictine and Chartreuse (using the root and seed), as well as for gin and vermouth (using the root).

For medicinal needs, the root and seed are used. Decoctions of the roots or seeds are used to treat issues such as indigestion, intestinal inflammation and flatulence. Infusions of the leaves (as a tea) have been used to aid in digestion. Angelica has also been used for bronchial problems.

Anise

Native to southwest Asia and the eastern Mediterranean region, anise is instantly recognizable for the distinctive licorice flavor of its leaves and seed. An herbaceous annual that is also cultivated in Mexico, Europe, the United States, Russia and India, sweet anise can grow up to 3 feet tall, with long shallow leaves at the base of the stem that become feathery as you go up. The flowers are ⅛ inch in diameter and white.

Anise is an annual in cold weather and a perennial in warm weather. Therefore, to start anise from seed the temperature needs to be at least 70°F to promote seed germination, with seeds being sown as soon as the ground is warm enough. Seeds should be sown in the spot where you want the plant to grow, as anise has a long taproot and can be difficult to transplant successfully. It is also possible to purchase seedlings, if you don't want to start with seeds; however, seeds are usually easier to find. If you are interested in companion planting, anise makes a good friend for coriander, as it enhances the growth of the plant.

When anise's oval seeds are grayish-brown, that's how you know the seeds are ripe and ready for harvest. Harvesting anise is quite easy; simply cut the entire seed head after ripening, but before the head opens up. Leave a bit of stem on it, long enough to tie the seed heads together, and place in a brown paper bag, seed heads down, and secure around the stems. Hang in a cool, dry place. As the pods open, the dried seeds will fall into the bottom of the bag. Once they're thoroughly dry, keep the seeds in a tightly sealed container. These seeds may be used for planting or culinary/ medicinal needs.

In culinary use, the sweet and aromatic anise seeds are used both whole and ground as well as in an extract. Anise is a key ingredient in a number of foods and drinks, including teas and confections, along with other sweet and savory dishes. Anise is also complemented by cinnamon and bay leaf. And, if your recipe (food, not drink) calls for anise but you're all out, fennel seed and fennel leaf can be used as a substitute. Oil of anise, also derived from the seed, is the basis for a number of liquors including Anisette, Ouzo and Turkish Raki.

You can find anise used medicinally as an ingredient in lozenges and syrups due to its mild antimicrobial action. The essential oil is a mild expectorant, which was recommended in ancient times by Hippocrates, for coughs. However, the remedy most commonly used would be anise tea. Made by steeping 1 teaspoon of crushed seed in one cup of boiling water for 10 minutes, it is an excellent after-dinner tea to aid in digestion. Anisette is also used as an after-dinner liquor for this purpose.

Apple

While not what most people would think of when picturing an herb garden, the culinary and medicinal benefits of apples are well-documented and

make a wonderful addition to any garden or landscaping project.

There are at least 2,500 known varieties of apple in the world. The tree is deciduous and can grow anywhere from 6–12 feet in height. It blooms in the spring on spurs or long shoots, with budding leaves and flowers that are white with a touch of pink (although the pink will fade with time). They come in clusters of four to six, with the central flower (called a king bloom) opening first and producing a larger fruit.

The fruit of the apple tree is a pome and will mature between late summer or autumn, depending on the type. Skins may be red, green, yellow, pink, or even russeted (having brown, rough patches). Some of the fruit may have bi- or tri-colored skins. Apples may be eaten raw, cooked, juiced, or dried, and can be made into cider, vinegar, brandy or wine.

There is an old saying: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” They’re not wrong—apples are considered to be a “Top 10” healthy food! Apples contain vitamin C, B complex, dietary fiber, phytonutrients and minerals. They are rich in antioxidants and flavonoids, have antiseptic properties, and can even help clean teeth! The phytonutrients and antioxidants in apples also help reduce the risk of some cancers, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes.

Perhaps one of the most celebrated products to come from apples is apple cider vinegar. Apple cider vinegar has dozens of uses, aside from culinary purposes: it can help with acid reflux, sinus infections, sore throat, high cholesterol, arthritis, and sunburn, just to name a few. Apple cider vinegar also helps with allergies due to its high quercetin content, which slows histamine secretion. Proper dosage of the vinegar will vary by issue, but it is usually 1–2 teaspoons. While you can take the vinegar straight, most find it just too strong to take alone. In that case, you can add the dosage to a glass of water and just drink that.

While apples are quite safe for consumption, there still may be a few interactions that cause ill effects or discomfort. One of these interactions is

apple juice and the drug fexofenadine, which has been found to decrease gut absorption of the medication. Apart from the apples, the seeds can also pose a slight health risk. Remember as kids when you were told not to eat the apple seeds unless you wanted a tree growing in your stomach? While that doesn't hold water, the part about not eating the seeds is true: apple seeds contain a bit of cyanide and eating too many can cause illness or even be fatal.

Arugula

An edible annual of the Brassicaceae family, arugula is also known by the names Italian Cress, rocket, roquette and rugula. Arugula is a slightly bitter, peppery salad green that is a good source of iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and as such is commonly grown as a culinary herb (though for most Americans, it can be an acquired taste).

The leaves of the arugula should be bright, green and fresh. It is a very perishable green, and if it is to be stored, it should be tightly wrapped in plastic and refrigerated. Even then, it will not last more than a few days.

Arugula has been traditionally collected in the wild or grown in the home garden with parsley and basil. It starts very easily from seed and can self-seed to bring itself back the next year. Arugula is used in soups, salads, pasta dishes and sauces. It has also become a popular pizza topping, being added raw just after the pizza has been removed from the oven.

Barberry (Berberis vulgaris)

Also known as European Barberry, Jaundice Berry, Pepperidge Berry and Sow-berry, the barberry plant is a deciduous shrub that grows in the northeast and the west. The stems of the plant can reach 3–8 feet in height, and are reddish in color when young, becoming grayish as it ages. Its leaves can either be egg or oval shaped with soft tipped bristles, and it has small

yellow flowers that hang in clusters from April to June. The berries, which should only be eaten when ripe, are bright red, oblong and edible, ripening between August and September.

Barberry is easy to grow and can be easily propagated from seed (when planted in the fall for spring germination). It likes sunshine best, but is shade tolerant. It does, however, need shelter from cold, hard winters. Barberry can be also propagated from clippings, and if you happen to have a plant that is producing suckers, these can be used as well. The barberry also works well as an ornamental and is easy to train, which is why they can be a good choice for knot gardens (a formal herb garden, designed and laid out to resemble a Celtic knot in shape).

Barberry has a number of uses in the culinary world. It can be found in jams, jellies, preserves, relishes and chutney. It is also simmered in syrups, soups, and stews, and is used in cake decorating and candy. The berries, which are harvested in the fall, are rarely eaten raw due to their sharp acidic flavor, but are rich in Vitamin C. The taste is similar to cranberries with a bit of citrus. In fact, cranberries or rose hips are sometimes substituted for barberries in recipes.

The bark of the Barberry root and its berries are used frequently in folk medicine. The root is usually harvested in the spring or fall, with decoctions of berries or root bark made into mouthwashes/gargles, while the fresh juice is said to relieve pyorrhea and, when directly applied, can strengthen gums. Another application is as a sore throat gargle, mixing crushed berries with water. The effectiveness of these mixtures is due to the barberry's astringent, anesthetic and antibacterial properties, stemming from the berberine the berries contain.

Dyers also use barberry as a natural dye. The roots may be harvested in the summer or fall and used fresh or dry. Depending on the mordant used, you can get a yellow, orange or yellow-green color. The stem, root or bark can be used to create the dye.

Basil

One of the most popular herbs, both in the garden and in kitchen, basil is an annual and a member of the mint family. Most varieties of basil are green (though not all, such as Opal and purple basil). It comes in a number of other varieties, including lemon, clove, cinnamon, small leaf, and Italian.

Although basil is a summer herb and does best when outdoors, this herb can winter over indoors, as long as it is not allowed to go to seed. It grows very easily from seed, though if you live in an area with harsh winters or frost, the soil should be at least 50°F before planting. However, if you can start them early enough indoors and transplant them when the ground temperature is right, you can remove the threat of frost an achieve an earlier planting. In warm climates, basil seed can be sown directly into the soil at any time. Basil can also be propagated through cuttings, provided you place the cutting in water to allow rooting to begin.

To help keep your basil plant going strong throughout the growing season, remove any flower sprigs before they go to seed and encourage the basil to remain bushy through pruning. The flower sprigs of the basil plant are also edible, with a strong basil flavor, and are nice in salads. Harvest the entire plant before the first frost or else transplant into a container and bring indoors.

Basil is a good ornamental, owing to its cute little flower heads. Some types of basil even have colorful foliage, making it an unexpected visual asset to any display or knot garden. Basil also makes for a great companion plant to tomatoes and peppers, and is said to enhance their growth.

Basil is traditional to Italian, Mediterranean and Thai cooking. The leaves and flowers may both be used, whether fresh or dry. It is also a popular ingredient in tomato sauce and gravy, and a main ingredient in pesto. Basil can intensify during cooking, and is typically added when poaching fish, chicken and seafood. It also works well with lemon, garlic and thyme in

soups, stews and sauces. Note that some cooks will wait to add basil until 10–15 minutes from the end of cooking.

For medicinal use, basil has a sedative action. It is said to be good for nervous headaches and anxiety. Basil tea is also used for digestive issues, stomach cramps, vomiting and constipation. To decoct basil tea, simply add 1 teaspoon of dry herb to 1 cup of boiling water and let steep for 4–5 minutes.

When storing and/or preserving basil, there are a number of options. It can be dried, dehydrated, refrigerated and even frozen. Regardless of method, when preserving, be sure to wash and dry the fresh leaves. In a clean, dry jar, alternate layers of basil with layers of salt until the jar is full and cover. The salt will draw the moisture out of the leaves, and will also take on the flavor of the basil while keeping the leaves fresh for use. To use the leaves, pull out the salt as needed and wipe off. The now-basil flavored salt can also be used as a seasoning.

To preserve in the freezer, chop fresh leaves and place in an ice cube tray, and cover with either water or oil. When frozen, remove from tray and place in a freezer-safe container and return to freezer. Use the cubes as needed. To store fresh basil in the refrigerator, wrap leaves lightly in a wet paper towel and place in a plastic bag. The basil will last for up to 4 days. You can also store basil on the stem in a glass of water, being sure to change the water every 2 days. The basil should last a week or more using this method.

You can also dry basil simply by hanging it upside down in a dust-free dry room. Dehydrators, ovens and microwaves will also successfully dry it. Once you know that the leaves are perfectly dry, strip them from the stem, crumble and store in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dry place out of the light.

Bay

Bay, also known as sweet bay laurel, bay laurel, true laurel and Grecian laurel, may look like a simple herb. Yet bay laurel is a fossil, a leftover from the laurel forests that once covered the Mediterranean Basin when it had a more humid climate. It is believed that most of those laurel forests disappeared at least 10,000 years ago due to a change of climate conditions during the Pliocene era, though some of the forests do remain today.

The bay laurel is an evergreen shrub, or small tree. It is a dioecious (or unisexual) plant, meaning the individual plant can have male or female flowers, but not both. Sizes vary, but the bay has been known to reach more than 50 feet tall. Bay can be kept pruned into a hedge; however, the more often the plant is pruned, the less berries and flowers there will be.

The flowers of the bay laurel are a pale yellow-green, found in pairs besides the leaves. The fruit is a small, skinny and berrylike drupe with one seed. When flowering, the plant presents a sweet scent. Bays are resistant to most pests and diseases, and when there *are* issues they are mostly due to too much water, not enough sun, or too much cold. They are hardy to zones 8–10 and very frost sensitive, meaning it is necessary for the plant to be brought indoors for the winter, despite being a perennial in warmer zones.

Bay laurel is slow growing, tolerant of moist soil, but at the same time needs to be in soil that drains well. Adding compost will help with drainage. If you are in a cold climate, keep the plant in a container. In terms of exposure, bay likes full sun to part shade, and in hotter climates will definitely prefer shade. If growing indoors, the plant needs bright light and occasional misting to maintain ideal humidity. Bay planted in a container will also respond well to a fish emulsion fertilizer, usually once in the spring and once in the summer. Bay laurel planted in a container will need re-potting every 2–3 years, with spring being the best time for this job.

Bay can be propagated through both seeds and cuttings. Root 6-inch cuttings by removing all but the top two leaves, dip the cutting in rooting hormone, and insert into a full pot of soil. Firm the soil around the cutting and cover it with a clear plastic bag. Keep away from sunlight in a 60°F room and slightly moisten the soil. Remove the bag daily to control humidity and allow the cutting to adjust to less humid conditions. Cuttings are ready for transplanting when new buds and roots (several inches long) have begun. You can also purchase plants at many nurseries.

Bay leaves are a source of Vitamin C, Vitamin A (among other vitamins), folic acid, volatile oils and minerals. It is also an aromatic. The dried berries have a robust flavor and are used as a spice to flavor meats and sauces. The leaves, when used whole, are used for flavor and should be allowed to simmer in the pot during the cooking stage, but *not* left in at the end (as with many herbs). Bay leaves should be harvested from plants no less than 2 years of age. To preserve the leaves, dry them flat on a covered cookie sheet or screen in a warm, dry room for 2 weeks. Store leaves whole, in an airtight container. Whole leaves are also used in bouquet garnish, commonly bunched together with thyme and sage (although rosemary and tarragon may also be added). It is also thought that a leaf or two stuck in a container of flour will help keep bugs out of it. The ground leaves can be used in soups and stocks, and are safely ingestible.

Bay leaf tea is used for digestive disorders. Take 5 grams of bay leaves and a small piece of fresh ginger (if you find you want more ginger flavor, you can add more the next time you make the tea). Boil the bay and ginger in 200 mL of water until only a quarter of the water remains. Add honey to taste.

In terms of medicinal usage, extract of bay laurel has been used as an astringent as well as a salve made for wounds, aroma therapy and massage therapy. A poultice soaked in bay leaves that has been boiled is used for poison ivy and oak, as well as stinging nettle. To make a poultice for head and chest colds, simmer some leaves and berries until soft and place on the chest. Leave on until it cools.

Massaging the temple with bay leaf oil can help with migraines and headaches (as always, the essential oil should be diluted). You can also apply bay leaf oil to heal cuts, bruises and insect bites. You can use the following for insect stings and bites: mix ground bay with a little oil (such as olive or almond) to make a paste and apply topically.

Bee Balm *(Monarada)*

Also known as Oswego tea, bee balm is an herb unique to North America and found on most hillsides and in meadows (i.e. thickets, woodlands and stream banks), at locations up to 5,000 feet in elevation. It is from the Monarada family, a genus of flowering plants in the mint family (Lamiaceae) which include both annual and perennial herbaceous plants. Bee balm can be annual, perennial or biennial, depending on climate.

The plant itself has flowers clustered in whorls at the top of the stem, with leaves that are dark green, ovate and toothed, ranging 3–6 inches in length. The fruit present as little “nutlets” that have a resemblance to seeds.

Bee balm is said to have been discovered by the Otsego Indians in what is now known as Otsego, New York. The natives brewed a tea from it, used for both recreational and medicinal use. When the settlers arrived, they adopted similar practices. The plant is known to have a strong, antiseptic effect. It is, in fact, a natural source of the antiseptic compound thymol.

Bee balm is easy to propagate from seeds or divisions. As it tends to cross pollinate easily, divisions (if you can get them) are best. You can also purchase plants at nurseries. Bee balm does best in sunny or partly sunny areas, but does have the ability to thrive in various conditions. It is also a companion plant for tomatoes and is used to attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

For harvest, it’s the leaves that are most needed (for teas), with the two main harvest times being just before and just after flowering. To harvest, simply remove the leaves from the stems and allow to dry thoroughly, making sure that the color remains. Lose the color and flavor will be affected. If a plant is totally cut back after the first bloom, it will promote a second flowering for early in the autumn. When the lower leaves begin to yellow, cut the plant within 1 inch of the ground. Again, if this happens early enough, you could end up with a second blooming.

The fresh leaves of bee balm have traditionally been used as a seasoning for wild game and, of course, tea/tea blends. Nowadays, it is added to salads and used as a garnish, as well as seeing inclusion in sausage, curry and pork dishes. Bee balm also complements fruits such as strawberries, apples, oranges and melon. The blossoms may be used as well, and will give a splash of color to food or beverages.

Herbalists today use bee balm for coughs, sore throats, nausea, flatulence and menstrual cramps. Bee balm also makes a wonderful aromatic and is

used dried in potpourri, while the crushed leaves make a fragrant essential oil.

Birch

This might be a bit much to include in your backyard garden next to the carrots and tomatoes, but if you're planning to grow useful plants and herbs in and around your existing landscaping, this can be a great addition. Known alternately as sweet birch, black birch and cherry birch, the birch comes from the genus *Betula lenta L*. and is of the Betulaceae family. Birch is a soft wood, native to cold, northern climates. It is the same tree that canoes and baskets were once made from, and can not only be found in the woods, but in many yards as well. The sap of the birch (or birch water) is high in fructose (unlike maple sap, which is high in sucrose), has 17 amino acids, minerals, enzymes, proteins, antioxidants, and vitamins C and B. It makes a drink that can be preserved as a wine, beer, or spirit, drank as birch water, or made into a syrup. It is also known to be able to reduce inflammation and hydrate skin.

The birch has a multitude of uses, but it is its medical properties that are historically valued. It is rich in potassium and said to be safe, with no known side effects. The sap itself has a short shelf life, so unless you know exactly what you want to do with it immediately after harvest, it can be frozen for preservation. The tree should be tapped in the spring, after the frosts subside but before the leaves or buds emerge. To collect the sap, drill a hole into the tree. Insert a tube into the hole (a flexible straw will do). Allow the sap to collect into some sort of collection vessel, like a clean bucket. After a week, remove the tube and, using a twig, plug the hole tightly to seal the hole and keep it from "bleeding".

Birch leaves can be used to make a tea or an infused oil. The leaves may be used dried or fresh, but are best used fresh, when available. Pick the leaves in the spring or early summer. To dry the leaves, spread them out on paper or on a drying screen away from the sun, until crisp and crumbly. Create a birch leaf tea by steeping 4–5 leaves (fresh or dry) in a cup of boiling water for 5–10 minutes. Uses for this tea include help for fever, fluid retention, arthritis/rheumatism, kidney stones, detoxing and gout.

Birch leaves can also be used to make an infused oil. Pick the leaves in the late spring or early summer. Put them in a large jar, packed as high as you'd like (though if you fill the jar, leave space for stirring). Do not pack the jar. Cover the leaves with olive or sweet almond oil, cover the jar with a cloth and a rubber band, and place the jar in a sunny, indoor spot. Stir regularly, making sure that the leaves stay under the oil. After 4–6 weeks (or longer, if you want it stronger), strain the leaves out of the oil using a jelly bag or a strainer into another clean container. Allow the strained oil to settle (any water that may have gotten into the oil will sink). Pour the oil into sterile jars or bottles; colored glass is best as it will protect the oil from light. However, if you have to use clear glass, store it away from light. Uses for the oils include helping with psoriasis, massages, muscle aches, and eczema.

You can use dried or powdered bark as a tea or poultice. Harvest bark only from trees that are already dead, as removing bark from live trees can kill them. Dry the bark as you would the leaves and store in a container.

Blackberries

Wild blackberries are native to eastern North America, found everywhere from Nova Scotia to Ontario, Canada, from New York to Virginia and North Carolina. They can be found in thickets, on road sides, in hedgerows, meadows, etc. From the genus Rubus and the family Rosaceae, there are over 375 species and sub-species of blackberry within the genus.

Blackberries are a perennial plant with biennial canes or stems and perennial roots. The first year cane, or **primocane**, has palmately compound leaves but does not produce flowers during that first year. The second year, it becomes a **floricane**; while there is no change in length, the lateral buds begin producing flowering laterals. Shoots from both years will have thorns. The flowers, which will come in the late spring or early summer, will be on short clusters of flowers known as **racemes**, which are found on the flowering lateral tips. These flowers will have five white or pink petals 2–3 centimeters in diameter. The fruit will only develop when the ovules are fertilized. Then, after 2–3 years, the canes will die.

The root bark, leaves, and berries of the blackberry bush can all, at one time or another, be harvested. To harvest the root bark, gather it before the plant begins to flower in the spring. Cut the roots from the plant and rinse well. Peel the root bark off, cut it into strips and dry thoroughly on a screen or cookie sheet (turning to make sure all sides are dry, if using a cookie sheet). When harvesting the leaves, they may be taken at any time, as long as they are green and healthy.

The berries (or fruits) of the blackberry have been eaten by humans for thousands of years. They are usually black or dark in color when ripened and ready to pick, and red beforehand. Botanically, the berries are actually an aggregate fruit (developed due to several ovaries in a single flower merging together) and not a berry.

Culinary uses for blackberries are well-known and will be familiar to most. Jellies, jam, wine, vinegar, pies and candy are just some of what can be done with harvested blackberries. The fruits ripen between June and July, at which point they will present as black or dark purple. Fruits may be used fresh right after picking, frozen for later use, or dried. The fruits are packed with vitamin C, high in fiber, are a good source of vitamin K, high in manganese, help with oral health and may even be good for brain health.

There can be some confusion on the difference between blackberries and raspberries. The easiest way to tell them apart is that when fruit is picked on the raspberry plant, the stem (or torus) will remain on the plant. With a blackberry, the stem will remain on the fruit.

Medicinally, the leaves and roots are also commonly used, and should come from first year canes. Both the leaves and root bark can, of course, be dried for later use. A syrup can even be made from the fruits for coughs. Leaf decoctions are used in a gargle, both for treating thrush and as a mouthwash. The leaves and root bark are known to work as an astringent, diuretic, tonic and vulnerary, as well as being used for cystitis, hemorrhoids, dysentery and diarrhea due to the large amount to tannins they contain. The root is the most astringent part of the plant, and is used to treat sore throats, gum inflammation and mouth ulcers. For oral health, blackberry extract also has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties that work against some of the bacteria that can cause oral disease, as well as possibly preventing or controlling gum disease and cavities.

When making blackberry tea, use 1 ounce of dried leaves and root bark, mixed. Steep for 1 minute in 1 pint of boiling water and strain. Drink one cup at a time.

A blackberry syrup can be made for coughs. Juice 2 cups of berries, then simmer on low heat with ¼ cup of honey. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring frequently. Turn the heat down to low and allow to simmer for 1½–2 minutes, or until the juices have been released. Again, stir frequently, allowing the spoon to mash the berries. Place the berry mixture into a sieve or jelly strainer in another bowl and press until all of the juices have been released. Pour syrup into an airtight container and refrigerate. Keeps for up to a week.

To use in a leaf poultice, bruise the leaves, place them on thin gauze, then cover with a second piece of gauze. Apply to abscesses and skin ulcers.

Burdock *(Arctium lappa)*

Burdock is known by a slew of other names, including sticky plant, burr seed, grass burdock, hardock, hare bur, burr burr and turkey burr. It is a biennial plant native to the northern United States and Europe. Burdock is a tough plant and grows easily from seed. When possible, it is best to place the seeds where you plan for the plant to live; however, if you must start the seeds in another place, transplanting as a small seedling is recommended,

due to the *very* long tap root the adult plant has. The root is long and fleshy, grayish brown on the outside and creamy white/off-white on the inside, and can go down at least a foot or more. Some who actually plant burdock will plant on soft soil mounds to make the eventual harvest easier. (That being said, planting or even transplanting may not be necessary if you're fortunate enough to live some place where burdock grows wild. Then, you can just harvest!)

The burdock plant has flowers that begin as purplish red blossoms approximately 1¾ inches across that change into the infamous burrs that stick to everything and everyone. They come in at about July-September. The leaves alternate and grow up to 20 inches in length with long stalks. Burdock can grow anywhere from 1–6 feet in height, although most average no more than 3–4 feet.

Harvesting of burdock can take place during the fall of its first year, though some will wait until spring. However, waiting to harvest in the spring will elevate the possibility of having to deal with the sticky burrs.

When selecting a root for culinary use, choose firm, young roots, 1 inch in diameter or less. Do not wash the roots until you are ready to use them. Then, before the root is cooked, clean and soak for 30 minutes in multiple changes of water, to help keep its color. Store fresh, unwashed roots tightly wrapped in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. The root does not need to be peeled before use. Roots may also be dried or sliced and dehydrated to preserve. (When a recipe calls for burdock root, celery root may be substituted.)

The spring leaves of the first year plants are very tender and can be used raw as a salad green or cooked as you would spinach or other greens. The young stalks can be peeled and chopped, then also used raw or steamed for 10 minutes.

As well as being edible, the fresh and dried leaves and roots of burdock can also be used medicinally. The plant has properties of aperient, cholagogue, diuretic and diaphoretic. The roots, seeds and leaves are used in teas, decoctions, and tinctures. The leaves can be crushed and used as a poultice for skin irritations and sores, as well as an external antiseptic and skin wash for acne, eczema, boils, sores and psoriasis.

Calendula *(Calendula officinalis)*

The calendula may be better known by one of its other names, including pot marigold or garden marigold. Native to the Canary Islands, southern and central Europe, and North Africa to Iran, the plant received its name from the ancient Romans, who observed that it went into bloom on the first day of each month on the calendar. The calendula has been associated with the sun for centuries due to the fact that it normally opens its flowers when the sun comes up, and closes them when the sun goes down.

Calendulas are erect annuals with many branches. They are covered with fine hairs and have a distinct odor when bruised. The flowers are outer (or ray) flowers in solitary, terminal heads. They can be anywhere from 1½–4 inches across, pale yellow to deep orange in color. The leaves are oblong with a smooth edge to a faint tooth, with the middle and upper leaves located on an actual stalk, and the lower leaves found on a short stem. The fruit is boat-shaped and rough skinned; it has one seed and does not open to release it (the seeds may be winged or curled). The plant is bushy; however, it can become a bit disheveled and floppy if it is not periodically pinched back.

The calendula propagates easily from seed and may be sowed directly into the ground if the soil temperature is at least 60°F. It is a hardy plant that can survive frost and early snows; however, it does do better during cooler

seasons in warmer climates. In climates that do not have severe winters, the calendula will self-seed.

The flower of the calendula can be harvested and used for culinary purposes. The flowers are ready for harvest when they are newly opened. To harvest, pinch the flower heads off the stems and dry them in the shade on paper or cloth (as they may stick to a screen, though some have success using a nonmetallic screen). If you cannot dry them outdoors, use a dry place indoors away from direct sun. Do not allow petals to touch each other, as this can affect the color. When the flower is totally dry, pick off the petals and store in an airtight glass container, preferably somewhere dark.

Calendula's peppery flavor makes it a great addition to soups, salads and sauces. The petals may be ground up and used as a saffron substitute, while the flowers can be used in pickles and preserves. The flowers have also been used to color butter, custards and liquors, much like saffron is used for color.

Although it was never considered a major healing herb, calendula does have its place in the herbal medicine box. It can be used to treat headaches, fever and toothache, and can be very effective as an antiseptic and anti-inflammatory in cream or balm form. It is especially suited for chapped hands and lips, diaper rash and other minor skin irritations.

Calendula also has its place in the craft and household use world, producing a yellow dye when used on wool specially treated with alum mordant, which you can find in the spice section of some stores (or order from craft shops). It also dries nicely for dried arrangements. A calendula rinse can bring out highlights in brunette and blonde hair, while the flowers may also be used in bath mixes.

Caraway

Also known as meridian fennel and Persian cumin, caraway is a biennial from the genus Carum and is native to Asia, Europe and North Africa. Caraway has feathery leaves with thread-like divisions, with the stems of the plant reaching 8–12 inches high and the main stem reaching 16–24 inches. It has small pink or white flowers on umbels; the seeds of the plant are actually its fruits. Caraway likes a warm, sunny area with well-drained rich soil. Depending on the region, caraway plants can be annual or biennial.

The fruit (or seed) of the caraway, which is the part of the plant most everyone is familiar with, has an anise-like flavor and scent and is usually used whole in cuisine. Its aroma comes from the essential oil, which is also used as a fragrance and breath freshener (even chewing on a few seeds will accomplish this), and has many uses in folk medicine.

When purchasing caraway seed, it is better to buy whole and grind as you need it. Store the seed in a cool, dry, dark spot in an airtight container. They will keep for months. However, if you are grinding some seed and have ground too much, it can be stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container. It needs to be used as quickly as possible because the ground seed will lose flavor quickly.

Caraway has a multitude of culinary uses. Considered a savory spice, the seeds are used in breads, liquors, soups, salads, desserts and in sauerkraut. They are also used as a seasoning for sausage making. The lesser known roots are cooked up like parsnips and the leaves are used as an herb and can be dried, cooked, or used raw, similar to parsley.

Caraway has a number of medicinal benefits as well. It is an excellent source of calcium, iron, copper, potassium, selenium, zinc, manganese and vitamins A, E, C and B complex. Caraway is also a rich source of dietary fiber, and the essential oils in the seeds have digestive, antioxidant, carminative/anti-flatulent properties, and for this reason can be found in medications to treat both flatulence and indigestion.

To make a caraway tea for a digestive, boil 12 ounces of water. Pour the boiling water over 1 tablespoon of caraway seed. Cover the cup to keep the heat in (a saucer placed on top of the cup will work) and steep

for 15 minutes. Strain the seeds out and add honey to taste. Mint may also be added (again, to taste) for additional flavoring if you wish.

You can also create an infusion by boiling the seeds directly in the water for 15–20 minutes. Allow the infusion to sit overnight.

Catnip *(Nepeta cataria)*

Catnip is another herb from the mint family, one which is very familiar to cat owners as a treat for their feline friends. Historically, however, catnip was more commonly found in kitchens and infirmaries, with Roman cooks and doctors making extensive use of the herb through the Middle Ages.

A perennial from the mint family, catnip can grow to 5 feet in height, though in the wild they're more likely to hover around 3 feet. It has a straight but square stem with scalloped edged leaves. The flowers are white with purple, and bloom from June to September.

Catnip is easily propagated by seed in the spring or fall, after the threat of frost has passed, and with root divisions in the spring (spring cuttings can also be used). The plant grows best in full sunlight. Catnip is drought tolerant, deer resistant and can repel aphids and squash bugs. To harvest, gather leaves and flower tops in late summer when in full bloom. Dry in the shade or bunch together and hang upside down indoors in a dark, dry place. Store away from moisture and light.

Today, catnip is used medicinally in a tea made from dried leaves and flower heads. Although it is generally used as a digestive aid and tonic, mixed with peppermint, it is used as a calming, tension and stress relieving tea. It is also used as a juice, poultice and tincture. A simple tea or infusion is 1 teaspoon of dry herb or 3 teaspoons fresh. Pour one cup of boiling

water over the leaves and steep. Do not boil the leaves at the same time as you are boiling the water, as the all-important volatile oils will be lost and as a result, so will the healing properties of the herb.

Cats and Catnip

Cats love catnip, this much is common knowledge. But do you know why?

It's all due to an oil called **nepetalactone** which is found in the leaves and stems of catnip. This oil is why catnip is known as the feline aphrodisiac. While some believe that cats like to eat catnip, and that that's what is driving them "crazy", it is actually the scent, not the taste that the cats like. Chewing just releases the scent. Common cat behavior with catnip includes rubbing, rolling, licking and chewing the herb. Studies have shown that catnip not only affects domestic cats—it also affects lynx, cougar, leopards and some of the other wild cats.

It is interesting to know that the same oil that cats love has also been found to be very effective on mosquitos—even more so than DEET, which is the major ingredient in most repellents.

Cayenne *(Capsicum frutescens)*

A perennial native to Africa and India, though more typically native to tropic areas, cayenne also does well in more temperate climates (although, outside of the tropics it is an annual). Cayenne can be grown from seed or purchased as started plants. It is a shrubby plant with wood-like branches that can grow to 2–3 feet or more. The stems can be slightly purple at the nodes, with white star-shaped flowers that bloom in pairs or clusters, drooping on long stems. The leaves are elliptical and broad, 3–6 inches in length. The plant flowers from April to September and will produce a long, red pod or fruit that contains a large number of seeds. The plant needs sunlight and heat, and does best in the southern states in the United States.

The pepper pods, which are technically berries, are red, shiny, and leathery (there can also be shades of orange and yellow). The fruit is harvested when it turns bright red. To remove from plant, cut the stem at least half an inch from the pepper's cap. If drying, dry immediately, either by laying on a rack or stringing on a piece of string and hanging to air dry. They can also be dehydrated. Once dried, store in a container in a cool, dry place with no exposure to light.

In cooking, the pods are used whole, ground, as seeds only, or fresh. Keep in mind that the more ribs and seeds you remove from the pepper, the more heat you lose, while the more seeds and ribs you leave in, the hotter the pepper, be they fresh or dry.

Medicinally, the active ingredient in cayenne is capsaicin, which acts as a powerful stimulant when taken internally or used externally. It aids the digestive system and stimulates the saliva and gastric juices, and is also a digestive stimulant. Using the powder on a cut will stop the bleeding. Powdered cayenne can be made into plasters, liniments, creams or tinctures and applied to arthritic areas, sore muscles, etc.

When using cayenne for medicinal purposes, use in moderation. Cayenne may be dangerous for those with chronic bowel disease or duodenal ulcers. Even in healthy people, excessive use of cayenne can result in severe stomach upset or, in the worst-case scenario, kidney damage. Culinary use, however, doesn't seem to have the same effect. Cayenne should also not be given to infants or used internally if the kidneys are weak.

Chamomile

There are two types of chamomile: Roman or common (*Anthemis nobilis*) and German or wild chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*). Roman chamomile is a low-growing perennial, no more than 9 inches tall, usually with a strong scent. German chamomile is tall, 2–3 feet when erect, and an

annual. It is a creeping plant and tough enough to be used in walkways. Some will even make lawns out of it!

While in medieval England, chamomile was used primarily to freshen the air with its light fragrance, today it is a great herb for flower arrangements, dried arrangements, and potpourri. In Spain, where it is known as Manzanilla or “little apple”, chamomile is used to flavor fine sherry. Before refrigeration, immersing meat in chamomile tea was supposed to help eliminate the odor of spoilage. Chamomile is also a good ornamental due to its ease of care and apple-like scent.

Chamomile can be started from seed or you can purchase sprouted plants. The seeds of Roman chamomile are very fine, and if planted too deep will not sprout; as a result, they need to be sown near the surface. Roman chamomile may also be divided in early spring, but should be heavily mulched for hard winters. Chamomile attracts beneficial insects; however, Roman chamomile doesn’t have tons of blossoms as you might think. On the other hand, German chamomile tends to bloom more than the Roman; as a result, some will grow the German type for the sake of a larger harvest. Both types of chamomile have daisy-like blossoms and feathery foliage and both like full sun to partial shade. For harvesting and drying, gather blossoms when in full bloom. Blossoms should be slowly dried, as fast drying or heat drying can affect the potency of the herb.

Medicinally, many cultures view chamomile as the plant’s physician, as it has the reputation of helping plants it grows near that are having problems. In human medicine, extracts from the plant are what give the plant its medicinal value. Chamomile has three main uses, medicinally: as an anti-inflammatory (skin and mucus membrane), an antispasmodic (indigestion), and an antibacterial treatment.

Tea is brewed from the flower heads, and is the most common concoction used, although it is not as good as the extract and contains only a small amount of the beneficial oil. Extract is therefore used when making

ointments, inhalations, vapor baths and lotions. Cosmetically, the tea is also used as a hair rinse to accent the natural highlights of blonde hair. Teas/infusions can be used for baths, if you wish. Simply steep a large bunch of chamomile in a bowl or jar of water for 15 minutes. Allow to cool then pour into a prepared bath.

Chervil *(Anthriscus cerefolium)*

Also known as sweet cicily and native to Europe, Asia, and naturalized in North America, chervil is an annual and a member of the parsley family, with fern-like leaves and a mild anise flavor. It is usually cultivated for its leaves, but the root is also edible.

To propagate chervil, sow seeds in the fall for spring germination. Keep in mind that the seeds do not keep, so they might not do well if you save them over the winter. This is another herb that is best grown in place, as it is a poor transplant candidate. However, it *is* a good plant for containers. Plant seeds in 1-inch deep furrows, but do not cover as the seeds need to be kept moist and exposed to the sun. As an alternative, you could start with plants from a nursery.

The plant itself has a round, grooved stem with branches that reach 12–26 inches in height. The leaves are opposite, bipinnate, and light green in color. The plant produces small white flowers from May through June. The seeds are elongated and segmented, with ripening occurring between August and September. To keep the plant from bolting and going to seed before the season is over, cut or pinch back flowers and ends.

Chervil needs to dry quickly once it is harvested, to preserve the flavor. An oven or dehydrator will work well here. You can also make butter or vinegar to preserve the flavor.

For culinary purposes, the leaves and stems are used (in whole sprigs) to make a nice garnish. Chervil, parsley, thyme and tarragon are the three

herbs that make up “Fines of Herbs”, which is used in soups, sautés, and stews. Chervil also enhances the flavors of carrots, cheese, fish, corn, or peas. It can be used like parsley, but avoid boiling as it diminishes the flavor. In fact, the herb should be added at the last minute when cooking.

Cinnamon

Although generally considered a spice, cinnamon also crosses over into the herbal sphere. The name “cinnamon” actually describes its color, and is the name of both the tree and the spice. Cinnamon is from the genus cinnamomum and the family Lauraceae and comes from the inner bark of multiple species of the genus.

Native to Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh, cinnamon is an evergreen with oval leaves, thick bark and a berry-like fruit. In antiquity, cinnamon was highly prized and considered a fit gift for royalty. According to Pliny the Elder, the cost of one Roman pound (328.9 grams) of cinnamon was the equivalent of over 4 years of labor.

There are a number of species marketed and sold as cinnamon, including: Chinese cinnamon (or cassia); Indonesian; Indian; Ceylon; Vietnamese cinnamon; and Saigon cinnamon. Despite this, only cinnamomum verum is considered to be the true cinnamon. Ceylon and cassia contain coumarin which, if taken in high doses, can have dangerous side effects; however, using the cinnamon just as a spice makes it difficult to consume enough to be toxic).

Most will purchase their cinnamon already ground, but it is also available in a dried bark form. You can usually tell what type you have by the bark. Ceylon will have many thin layers, and due to this the bark is easily ground in a coffee or spice grinder. Cassia will be harder than Ceylon and will always be in broken pieces because the bark is unable to roll itself into quills. Saigon will also be broken. Indonesian cinnamon will be sold in

quills (rolls) of one thick layer, and can damage a grinder due to its thickness.

The cultivation and harvesting of cinnamon involves the harvesting of the bark and the leaves, although it is the bark that everyone is most familiar with using. Trees are grown for 2 years before the stems are cut at ground level. The next year, dozens of the new shoots coming from the roots will replace the cut stem. The stems need to be processed immediately, while the inner bark is still wet.

When cultivating your own cinnamon, scrape off the outer bark and then beat the branch with a hammer to loosen the inner bark. Pry it off into rolls and discard the woody portions. The remaining strips will curl into quills or rolls as they dry (except for Cassia and Saigon), usually taking 4–6 hours in a very well-ventilated, warm spot (warmth is very important to discourage pests).

Cinnamon is used mainly as a culinary condiment in teas, sweet or savory cuisine, cereals, and snacks. However, it also has a history of use in traditional medicine, generally for bronchitis, diabetes and reducing inflammation, with the health benefits being tied to its essential oil. It is thought that a mix of honey and cinnamon may lower the risk of heart disease as well as lower blood sugar. Honey and cinnamon is also well documented for its healing properties on the skin thanks to its ability to fight bacteria and decrease inflammation, and both are excellent sources of antioxidants.

To use cinnamon and honey, mix 3 tablespoons honey with 2 tablespoons cinnamon powder. Mix until it turns into a paste, adding more cinnamon if necessary. Apply a generous amount with your fingers to the affected areas. Massage in a circular motion until dry, then leave it on for 5 minutes. Wash the area with soap and water to remove any sticky residue.

Honey and cinnamon is also used as a tool for weight loss. Put 1 teaspoon of honey and ½ teaspoon of cinnamon in a cup of green tea.

Cinnamon may react with certain medications, so you should check with your doctor before using it to make sure you won't run into issues. You may also have reactions with overuse, and it *can* become toxic in large enough

doses. A general rule of thumb for safety is a daily intake of up to 1 teaspoon of Ceylon per day or up to ½ teaspoon of Cassia, if using as a supplement.

Clove

Native to Maluku (the Spice Islands), cloves are also cultivated in Malaysia, Brazil, Madagascar, Sumatra, India, and Jamaica, among other places. The name comes from the Latin “clavus”, the word for nail, due to the shape of the dried berry. As well as having culinary and medicinal uses, clove is also an aromatic, excellent for simmering, pomanders and potpourri. A non-hardy evergreen, the entire tree is actually an aromatic, but it is only the unopened flower bud that is used.

Since it needs a steamy, wet and warm climate, growing a clove tree can be difficult, if not an out-and-out challenge for most new homesteaders and backyard farmers. If you’re up to the challenge and live in an appropriate climate (or have a set-up which allows you to grow in a container), it is best to try and find someplace where you can purchase seedlings.

The clove tree can grow 15–30 feet in height. The leaves of the tree are oblong or lance-shaped, 5 inches in length or longer. They are glossy, green, veined and fragrant. The flowers are solitary racemes that are terminal clusters/cymes. Their color is-white with a peachy-pink or red tinge, with petals shielding many stamens.

In culinary use, clove has a distinctive smell and flavor that most people immediately recognize. The dried bud can be used whole or ground; however, if using whole, remember to remove the cloves from the dish before serving! A strong, clear clove oil may also be substituted for ground cloves.

Cloves are good with foods such as pickled beets, carrots, squash, cranberries, stews, spiced and mulled beverages, etc. It is also used in

brines and marinades, as well as a garnish for ham during the baking process.

Medicinally, cloves were used as a mild anesthetic and a temporary fix from toothache pain (when bruised cloves are held in the mouth). A diluted clove oil may also be purchased. A few drops of oil on a tooth will stop the pain, while a few drops in water can stop vomiting. Keep in mind that pure clove oil can be a skin irritant and/or cause an allergic reaction, so use the pure oil with caution. Clove tea can also help with nausea. Should you want to make a diluted clove oil, simply soak whole cloves in olive oil.

Chives *(Allium schoenoprasum)*

Chives are probably the very first herb that goes into most gardens. Chives are a widespread perennial, found both cultivated and wild. They can grow 8–12 inches and have hollow, cylindrical leaves and flower stems from the small root.

Chives will start easily (albeit slowly) from seed; however, since plants are easy to find and purchase, it's usually the preferred way to go. If you have a friend thinning out their chive patch, you can also plant from their divisions. Chives do well in containers and are another herb that you may find on sunny countertops and window sills. Along with being an edible, it makes for a nice ornamental plant that can work well implemented into existing landscapes and is one that pests rarely bother.

Mostly a culinary herb, chives are actually a "bulb" plant; however, the bulbs are so small that they are often too little to notice. Chives are related to onions and leeks and are a good source of vitamin A with potassium and calcium. The leaves are hollow and the long flower stems come up from the bulb. The taste depends on the type you get; onion chives have a mild onion taste, while the round, purple blossom has a bold, strong flavor. As for harvesting and storage, chives are best used fresh and cut as needed.

Snipping leaves can begin once the plant reaches 6 inches in height. Remember not to cut them too short, or the plant may have difficulties coming back. Leaves can be used minced, chopped or whole as a garnish. The flowers are good in salads or as a garnish.

If you need to store chives, they can be placed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to a week. Chives can also be frozen, dried or freeze-dried, but this method is used mostly in soups and stews and other dishes, not as a garnish.

Chicory *(Cichorium intybus)*

Chicory is a relative of the endive and a perennial that is found both cultivated and wild in the United States and Europe. Although it *can* be found in the wild, chicory can also be planted from seed in late spring in an area with moderate sun. Note that it may decide to take over, so be sure that the plant is either confined or placed in a space where taking over wouldn't be an issue. Chicory grows from 2–3 feet tall, with sparse leaves and a rather unique purple/blue flower. The leaves at the base of the plant are fuzzy and resemble a dandelion's leaves. The tap root also resembles that of the dandelion; the root is light yellow on the outside and white on the inside with a milky, bitter juice.

In the culinary world, the leaves are used in salads or cooked like spinach. The leaves can be used whole or shredded. The roots are roasted and used as a coffee substitute or added to coffee. In New Orleans, this coffee/chicory blend is called New Orleans or Creole coffee. Roots may also be steamed or boiled and served with herbs, spices and butter. Harvest the root in fall.

The traditional medicinal properties of chicory and decoctions of the root are considered a tonic, laxative and diuretic, similar to dandelion. Decoctions of dried root are used to treat issues with stomach acid, and the

French have taken to adding the dried root to coffee in order to counteract the acidic effect coffee can have on the stomach.

In medieval times, the leaves were bruised, soaked, and softened in freshly boiled water for their healing properties. It was used for skin lacerations, swelling and inflammation.

For those looking to augment their home crafts kit, chicory also produces an orange dye.

Coffee

One of the most popular drinks in the world, coffee has both culinary and medicinal value, as well as the ability to be used as a dye. Coffee comes from the family Rubiaceae and the genus Coffea. It is native to Madagascar, tropical Africa, Comoros, R'union and Mauritius. Today, it is cultivated in at least 70 countries, including regions of South East Asia, the Americas, Africa and India. Coffee plants may be found in nurseries within the United States; however, they can be tricky to grow. They are very fussy about being moved, and growing in a container presents its own difficulties.

Two main types are cultivated: *Coffea camephora*, otherwise known as Robusta; and Arabica, the most highly regarded and most recognized. The coffee plant is an evergreen shrub/tree that can grow as high as 15 feet if not kept pruned. The leaves are dark green and glossy, and range from 4–6 inches long. The auxiliary flowers are white clusters and bloom simultaneously, followed by oval berries.

The immature berries are green and ripen to yellow, then crimson, and will turn black when dried. Ninety percent of the berries will contain two seeds or beans. It takes the Arabica bean 6–8 months to ripen (Arabica is also self-pollinating) and Robusta 9–1one months to ripen. The ripe berries are picked, processed and dried. The beans are then roasted to the point of

the desired flavor. The roasted beans are ground and brewed into the popular drink, although whole beans may also be purchased and ground in home grinders. Coffee should be stored in an airtight container of glass, non-reactive metal or ceramic. It should be kept away from light, heat, and moisture. It can also absorb odors.

On top of their well-known culinary uses, coffee actually has a number of health and medicinal applications (although caffeinated has shown to have greater benefits than decaffeinated). Coffee is high in antioxidants, containing more than a serving of raspberries, blueberries, grape juice or oranges. These antioxidants may lessen inflammation, reducing disorders related to it. The benefits of coffee, taken orally, are said to lessen the risk of heart disease, and 3 cups of the drink have been shown to lessen development of calcification in coronary arteries. Two or more cups per day reduces the risk of dying from a heart attack. Four cups per day is also said to lower the risk of multiple sclerosis by preventing the neural inflammation that can lead to the development of the disease. It is also believed that, with moderate consumption of coffee (2–3 cups per day), there is a 25 percent reduction in the risk of colorectal cancer.

Coffee can also have a place in your skin and body routine. Cold, used grounds can be applied under puffy eyes. Leave on for a few minutes and rinse with cold water (being careful that you don't get grounds in your eyes). The grounds increase circulation and reduce puffiness due to the high antioxidant properties that coffee has, helping to shrink the blood vessels.

Ground coffee and brown sugar together create a beneficial face scrub. Simply take grounds, brown sugar and olive oil and mix into a paste. Portion the amounts in a way that works for you, but remember that the grounds will work as an abrasive. Apply to the face in a circular motion and rinse to remove dead skin cells. For scalp exfoliation and help with excess product build up, take ½ cup of ground coffee and massage into wet hair for 2 minutes. Shampoo with your regular shampoo and condition with your regular conditioner.

Lastly, you can use coffee as a facial. Simply combine coffee grounds with milk in an even ratio and mix to a thick consistency. Put

on the face for 10–15 minutes and wash off with lukewarm water to rid the face of dead skin cells.

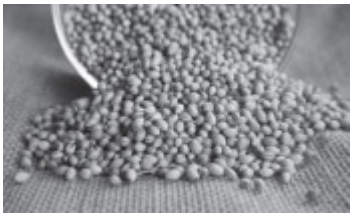
However, coffee may not be beneficial for all, especially those who are caffeine sensitive, pregnant, or who have certain heart conditions. People in these groups are better drinking decaf or, if it is necessary to stay away from coffee completely, tea. Coffee also has other minor side effects that include jitters, sleep impairment, anxiety, frequent urination, palpitations and heartburn.

As a dye material, brewed coffee produces a brown color when used on fabrics, and is often used for faux-aging fabrics and paper.

Coriander / Cilantro

Also known as Chinese parsley, coriander is an annual from the Apiaceae family. The herb, however, still has a bit of an identity crisis as far as names are concerned. In the United States, the plant is called cilantro, while only the seed is called coriander. In the United Kingdom, the plant is called coriander and the seed is coriander seed. The name of the plant as a whole is sometimes mistakenly called *culantro*, which is actually a completely different plant.

Coriander starts easily from seed. It reaches 20 inches in height with variably shaped leaves and white or pale pink flowers with small umbels. The fruit is a globular dry schizocarp (meaning that it splits into single seed parts when ripened). All parts of the plant are edible; however, the dried seeds and fresh leaves are used the most in cooking.



The fresh leaves are used in foods in the Asia, India, Mexico and the Caribbean. It is also found in salads. The whole seeds are used in pickling as well as in mulled drinks, while the ground seeds are used in curry blends, soups and baking. Some may say that coriander/cilantro is an acquired taste, describing the taste of the herb as being similar to soap. However, the leaves and seed have a completely different taste from one another, and it is the plant itself that the "soap" taste comes from.

To store fresh cilantro, place it stem down in a glass of water, cover it with a sandwich bag and refrigerate, changing the water every two days. It should keep for about one week, although that can vary depending on the refrigerator. If you want to harvest the seed, wait until the flowers fade and most of the seeds have turned brown. Cut the seed pods with stems, tie them into a bunch and place upside down in a brown paper bag. When the seeds are fully ready, they will simply fall into the bag for gathering. These seeds can either be planted next season or for culinary use.

Dandelion

Also known as wild endive, the dandelion is a perennial plant that is found wild most everywhere. Although it can also be cultivated, the plant is so widespread that it is usually easier to forage. The word "dandelion" comes from the French *dent delion,* or "lion's tooth", referring to the leaf of the plant. All parts of the plant are edible and/or useful for healing. In fact, 1 ounce of fresh dandelion leaves contains large amounts of vitamin A and calcium, substantial vitamin B1, vitamin C, sodium, potassium and trace elements of other beneficials.

The bitter leaves of the plant are best when young, small and bright green in color, before the “famous” yellow flower appears. Once the stalks reach full height, the greens become too bitter for culinary use. Even in areas where the dandelion grows year-round, spring is the best time to harvest leaves. However, in the fall after a hard frost, the heavy bitterness of the leaves will disperse and the leaves may once again be harvested.

The leaves grow in rosette form on the ground. The stems that hold the bright yellow flower come from the center of this rosette of leaves. The buds and flowers are also edible, being made into things like jelly and deep-fried dishes, as well as wine. The leaves are used in salads and cooked like spinach. They can have a long tap root, which can be chopped and oven roasted until it reaches a rich brown color and becomes brittle, which can then be turned into a coffee substitute.

In using dandelion for medicinal needs, it is primarily the root that is put to use. It can be chopped into small pieces and slowly dried for use throughout the year. The root properties include that of a diuretic, tonic, and aperient. It has been used in Europe for hundreds of years for treating diabetes. The dandelion has been used in poultices (both the root and leaf), infusions, decoctions and extracts.

Dandelions are generally safe; however, if you have an allergy to marigolds, chamomile, chrysanthemum, ragweed, daisy, iodine or yarrow, dandelion may be an herb you want to steer clear of.

A natural dye can also be made from the dandelion using an alum mordant.

Dill (Anethum graveolens)

A hardy annual resembling fennel (but smaller), dill is also known as dilly and garden dill and is probably one of the most well-known and well-loved herbal flavors. A native of the Mediterranean, it can also be found growing wild in the corn fields of Spain.

Dill starts easily from seed and grows up to 3 feet tall, although it has been found slightly taller. It likes sunny areas and, due to its height, is best placed behind shorter plants. It is a fragile plant that can be damaged during transplanting. It is best to sow dill seed right in the spot where you want the plant to stay. The plant should also be allowed to establish itself before you begin harvesting leaves, especially if you started with a transplant.

The feathered leaves and seed are what is used from the plant. The leaf is known as dill weed and the seed, dill seed. The large head holds the seed which, when ripened to a light brown, can be harvested with some stem, tied together and placed in a brown bag. When the seeds are ready to drop, they will drop within the bag for easy removal. It takes 6–12 weeks for the seeds to ripen, depending on temperature. When cutting leaves, they should be snipped, not cut.

In culinary use, fresh is better than dry when it comes to dill, especially for dill weed. The weed is used with salads, vegetables, sauces, meats and dressings, while the seeds are used in pickling. Sometimes, in a jar of homemade dill pickles, you may find an entire dill head (along with some weed).

Medicinally, dill (especially the seed) is considered an appetite stimulant and helps those with insomnia. An infusion of 2 teaspoons of seed and 1 cup water, steeped for 10-15 minutes, will help with hiccups, while dill tea is good for an upset stomach.

Echinacea *(Echinacea angustifolia)*

More commonly known as purple corn flower and a member of the composite family, echinacea is native to America with two more species, *E.tennesseensis* and *E.laevigata*, listed as endangered in the United States. A drought-tolerant perennial, echinacea grows 1–5 feet tall and is indigenous to the central states, although it is grown throughout the country.

Echinacea germinates easily from seed, although plants and seedlings are also available for purchase.

The temperature needs to be at least 70°F when sowing seed. The plant has a composite head, with the flowers having a similar look to the Black-Eyed Susan. The echinacea flower appears in various shades of purples or white, flowering from June to October. The root may be collected in late fall, when the plant is 3–4 years old, but not later than that. Harvesting is done after hard frosts, when the plant goes dormant.

Medicinally, the root is typically used, though the plant itself does have some healing properties. Echinacea serves as an antiseptic, depurative and digestive as well as an anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory agent. It is used in teas, tinctures and capsule form to boost the immune system and to help fight and relieve some symptoms of the common cold and flu. It is important to remember not to use the root once the odor is gone; at this point, its potency has dropped below usable levels.

Echinacea is also a nice garden ornamental, being able to withstand hot and humid weather. It is a wonderful perennial for cut flower beds and drying flower beds, with the flower being particularly popular in dried arrangements.

Eucalyptus

Known mostly for its menthol-like smell and association with both the koala and panda, eucalyptus is a flowering plant that is part of the myrtle family (Myrtaceae). In Australia, where they grow profusely, they are also known as gum trees or stringy bark trees. Although the Eucalyptus is no longer endemic in South America, is was reintroduced from Australia.

The eucalyptus has leathery leaves, with flower petals that form a cap when it expands. The fruit is surrounded by a cup-shaped woody receptacle, which contains many seeds. The plant may be started from seeds or cuttings, grows from 8–200 feet in height and like full sun or, if being grown indoors in a container, a bright southern exposure window. Eucalyptus is a rapid growing plant and can be invasive when planted outdoors, not to mention messy. This messiness is due to the fact that, as many of the species age, they will shed their bark. They also take a lot of water and when grown in a container, the roots can fill it up quickly and become root bound. Although the eucalyptus may be grown in many areas, cold temperatures will limit its growth as they are not frost tolerant. Unless the plant is brought indoors or into a greenhouse, it will not survive the winters.

Many species of eucalyptus have leaves whose shape is actually dependent on the maturity of the plant, and will change as the tree ages, from round to elongated. The leaf gland of many of the eucalyptus species (especially *E.salicifolia* and *E.globulus*) contain the familiar eucalyptus oil, a volatile aromatic. It is also worth noting that, besides the oil, some plants produce a nectar that can create a monofloral honey (honey made with the nectar of one species).

Eucalyptus oil is the active ingredient in inhalants and expectorants. It is also used in fragrances, insect repellents, anti-microbial and cleaning products, and industrial solvent. The oil contains compounds that are powerful, natural disinfectants, which in large quantities can be toxic. It is also used in antiseptics, deodorants and, in small quantities, food. (It can be toxic and even fatal if the undiluted oil is consumed.) The oils are also used for wound treatment, inflammation, pain and swelling of the respiratory tract mucus membrane and asthma, and for joint pain and stiffness.

Although the oils are usually found as an ingredient in another product, it may also be purchased as a standalone product to be used medicinally

(topically). As with most essential oils, you should not apply it to the skin unless the oil has been diluted first. The diluted oils can then be used safely on the skin. For example, to help relive a bronchitis infection, rub diluted oil on the throat and chest. This is said to help dilate the air passages. Dilute with any safe carrier oils such as olive oil. You can also create lotions and creams with eucalyptus essential oil.

Finally, all parts of the eucalyptus plant can be used to make dyes, with colors including deep red, orange, yellow, chocolate and tan.

Fennel

A part of the carrot family, fennel is an upright growing plant with similarities to Queen Anne's lace (also known as wild carrot). There are two types of fennel: Florence fennel, also known as Finocchio, and common fennel. Florence fennel has a large bulbous base that is used as a vegetable and is rich in vitamin A. Cultivated in the Mediterranean and the United States, the base and stems are eaten both raw and cooked. Common fennel is the variety grown for its seeds, which are used whole or ground in sweet and savory dishes. Common fennel has no bulb, but the stems and greens are used the same as with Florence. The seed, although smaller, is sometimes confused with anise seed due to similarities in look, scent and flavor.

Fennel can be started from seed and should be sown as early as the soil is workable in moderate rich soil and sunlight. However, the plant is said to have an adverse effect on caraway, bush bean, kohlrabi and tomato if planted too closely nearby. Fennel also doesn't like wormwood or coriander.

Harvest fennel in the fall and spring using clean, crisp bulbs with no browning. Use immediately or tightly wrap in plastic and place in the

refrigerator for up to 5 days. Seeds from common fennel can be harvested much like dill.

Medicinally, fennel seed is typically what is used; however, the root can be used as well. Fennel is considered excellent for intestinal and stomach issues. Fennel is also used to stimulate the appetite, relieve abdominal cramps and colic, flatulence and help with expelling mucus accumulations. Fennel is also added to gargles for coughs and sore throats and as an oil rub on to help relieve rheumatic pain when rubbed on the afflicted area.

A natural dye can be made from fennel tops, flowers, stems and seeds. Depending on the mordant used, the dyes can end up being shades of yellow or green (yellow if no mordant is used; intense yellow if an alum mordant is used; and dark/forest green if iron is used, while chrome will produce a golden brown). The best colors come from when the fennel is in bloom. However, the other parts of the plant will also offer good color. The ratio is usually 2 pounds of fennel for every pound of fiber.

Fenugreek *(Trigonella foenum-graecum)*

Fenugreek is a native of southern Europe and Asia and an annual of the Fabaceae family, used for both medicinal and culinary needs, as well as a natural dye. Fenugreek can be grown from seed; however, the temperature must be at least 55°F, and the soil can’t be too cold or wet, or root rot may occur.

The leaves may be harvested for salad, but it is the seed that is used the most. The pods should be harvested when they are ripe, but before the plant has opened for the seeds to escape. Remove the seeds and allow them to dry. Store the thoroughly dried seeds for up to 6 months.

In cooking, some say that fenugreek seed tastes like a combination of celery and maple. They are certainly a sweeter seed, one that can be used whole or ground to flavor many blends, including curry powders and tea.

Caution needs to be taken, however, as people with peanut or chickpea allergies may also have problems with fenugreek.

Medicinally, fenugreek seed has the properties of an expectorant, restorative and mucilaginous. It has been used as a folk remedy for diabetes, anemia and rickets. Since the seed contains 30 percent mucilage, it makes a good poultice to soothe ulcers, boils and wounds. Poultices are also used for swollen glands, skin irritations and sciatica. A tea made from 1 ounce of seed and 1 pint of boiling water can soothe a sore throat. If you have issues with the taste or scent of the tea, honey or peppermint may also be added. Fenugreek has also long been considered an aphrodisiac.

Fenugreek is another herb that can be found in dyer's gardens, as the seeds produce a yellow dye when used with alum mordant on wool.

Flax

Also known as linseed and common flax, flax comes from the genus Linum and the family Linaceae. While flax is grown mostly for its seeds (for linseed oil and flour/meal), at one time it was grown more specifically for its fibers to make linen.

While flax can be grown at home, it can be a bit of a chore to thrash the plant (separating the seed from the dried plant/chaff). There are approximately 3 cups of flax seed to a pound, with plants yielding up to 10 small seeds per plant, meaning you will have to grow a lot of plants to obtain enough seed to make it worthwhile. Flax seed is easy to find and purchase in health and natural foods stores, and even certain bulk stores; but these stores also sell ground flax, so unless you are really into the idea of raising all of your own foods and supplements, you're better off purchasing your flax than growing it.

Flax seed is high in fat, fiber, and protein. The sprouts are edible, but when consuming them keep in mind that you will need to consume an

adequate amount of water, or else they can cause bowel obstruction. The seeds are high in Omega 3 fatty acids and have a high fiber content. Health benefits of the seeds include a reduced risk cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, and osteoporosis.

Both the seed and the oil may be used in baked goods, milk and dairy products, dry pasta, and with meat products. Perhaps the easiest way to consume flax is milled into flour or meal. The meal may be purchased pre-ground, or you can purchase the whole seed and mill it yourself. The flour can then be used in baking as a supplement or replacement for flour, eggs or fat (like butter or margarine). Keep in mind that when using a flax replacement, do not replace both eggs and fat in a single recipe, as the texture of the end result will be negatively affected. Flax seed can also be used to replace breadcrumbs when the crumbs are being used as a binder (as in a meatloaf, for example). Swap out a quarter of the breadcrumbs with flax, in an even swap.

It is worth noting that if flax seed is kept at room temperature, it can become rancid. Store seed in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator (up to 6 months) or the freezer (up to 1 year).

Garlic *(Allium sativum)*

Grown around the world, garlic comes from the genus allium and is related to onions, chives and leeks. It is notable for containing a chemical called allicin, which is what gives the garlic its scent and medicinal properties. Garlic is also high in vitamin B6, vitamin C, manganese, selenium and fiber.

Garlic is bulbous and grows up to 4 feet high. It produces hermaphroditic flowers that are pollinated by bees, butterflies, and other pollinating insects. It can be found in the wild almost as easily as it can be cultivated. In fact, garlic is very easy to grow, and can be cultivated year-round in places with moderate climates. It is grown from the individual cloves that make up the bulb, with each clove growing into one bulb of garlic. In colder climates, the garlic should be planted in the autumn before the soil freezes, and below the frost line so that it doesn't freeze. It will be ready for harvesting in late spring or early summer.

There are two types of garlic: hardneck, which produces larger cloves and does well in cooler climates, and softneck, which are tightly packed, smaller cloves, better suited for warmer climates. When planting the cloves, they *can* be grown close together; however, the bulbs will need enough room to be able to mature and grow, so don't pack them too close. The scapes or stalks that appear above ground may be removed to allow more energy to be directed to the growth of the bulb. The scapes are edible and may be consumed either raw or cooked. Garlic is usually a hardy plant against most pests and disease; however, it may be affected by pathogens, pink root, leek rot or downy mildew. Garlic likes loose, well-drained soil and plenty of sun. When looking for a place to grow your garlic, if you have roses in your garden, plant some garlic near them. The garlic will help keep the pests away from your roses.

Even though almost every part of the garlic plant is edible (except for the skin and root cluster), it is the bulb that is most used for culinary purposes. Once harvested, the garlic should be stored in a warm and dry place to inhibit sprouting. (Garlic can also be pulled when immature and sold as green garlic.) Peeled cloves can be stored in vinegar or wine and refrigerated. When stored in vinegar, the garlic will also infuse the vinegar, giving you a garlic vinegar as well as preserved cloves.

Garlic may also be preserved, at least for a while, in oil. However, steps must be taken in order to keep the oil from becoming rancid and preventing the growth of clostridium botulimin. The acidification of the garlic with a mild solution of vinegar first can minimize bacteria growth; however, neither that nor refrigeration can guarantee the long-term safety of the garlic and oil combination. As a result, it should be used within one month.

Although it is a well-known and popular culinary ingredient, the main use of garlic in ancient times was for treating health and medicinal needs,

and was used by the Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, Egyptians and Chinese for these purposes. Most of the health benefits of garlic come from the sulfur compounds that form when a clove is chewed, crushed or chopped. Garlic is used to reduce the effects of atherosclerosis, can reduce pre-meal blood sugar levels for diabetics, and can reduce high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Garlic was even used during WWI and WWII as an antiseptic to prevent gangrene. Taken as a daily supplement, garlic may reduce the number of colds a person gets. The equivalent of 4 cloves per day may also help reduce hypertension and LDL cholesterol levels. The antioxidants in garlic may even help to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Garlic is usually considered safe, but it can cause some side effects such as bad breath and body odor (although this risk may be reduced by taking garlic in tablet form), heartburn, gas, and diarrhea. It can increase bleeding and bruising risks if mixed with medication for slowing clotting. If on medication for high blood pressure, too much garlic may cause your blood pressure to go too low.

Ginger *(Zingiber officinale)*

Ginger is a perennial herb that almost everybody knows! It is indigenous to tropical Asia and cultivated in other tropical areas, including areas of the United States such as Florida, Hawaii and Texas. In colder climates, ginger may also be container grown.

Ginger is a flowering plant that is reed-like and which grows up to 4 feet tall, with clusters of white or pink flower buds which will bloom into yellow flowers. The 6–12-inch leaves are annual, while the plant itself is a perennial, and is easy to propagate with pieces of the rhizome. (The rhizome is what's used for both culinary and medicinal needs, and pieces of it may be taken when the stalk withers.) As long as they have not been

peeled or frozen, these ginger pieces may be planted. Unused portions of the rhizome may be refrigerated or even frozen. Note that if you plan on refrigerating the ginger until your next use, unless you give it a quick, immediate scald (not enough to cook it) or scrape the skin off, it will sprout. If you are freezing the piece, you will not have to worry about sprouting. You can even purchase ginger root from the store for sprouting, as long as it is fresh, not peeled or frozen (refrigerated is fine). However, the root should be plump and firm without any shriveling.

As an herb for cooking, ginger is known for its hot and spicy flavor. Fresh ginger can be substituted for ground at a 6:1 ratio. Fresh ginger can be pickled, made into candy and even wine (ginger infused wine is great for cooking as well). It is also a common flavoring for meats, vegetables and baked goods. Candied ginger is also a favorite treat as well as a garnish. Simply cook the pieces of root in a simple syrup (equal parts water and sugar) till soft. Don't throw the syrup away, either; that can be used for drinks and other places where you might want a splash of ginger.

As a medicinal plant, ginger is used for motion sickness and upset stomach, colic, cough, diarrhea, nausea and appetite loss, as well as rheumatoid arthritis pain and toothaches.

For a ginger compress, place 5 ounces of grated ginger root into 2 quarts of water. The water should already be quite hot, but not boiling, before the ginger goes in. Let the "tea" steep for at least 15 minutes, then strain the liquid through a cloth or a jelly bag. Twist the bag to remove remaining juice. Use this juice as a compress within a day. Or, you can mix equal parts ginger juice (made as suggested above) and cold pressed sesame oil. Use in place of a compress by rubbing into the skin at an affected spot.

Ginseng

Ginseng comes from the genus Panax, meaning "all healing" in Greek. It is the only true ginseng, although there are other species such as Korean and Vietnamese ginseng that share its name. The most popular types of ginseng used are American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius) and Asian Ginseng (Panax ginseng). They vary in concentration, their effects on the body, and

active compounds. American ginseng acts as a relaxing agent, while Asian ginseng is invigorating.

American ginseng

Ginseng is short, slow growing and has fleshy roots. It is categorized as fresh white or red, depending on how long it has been growing. For roots to be fresh, they should be harvested before they are 4 years old. White roots need to be 4–6 years old, and red, 6 years old and up. Fresh or green ginseng are roots that are young and raw. White ginseng is peeled and dried (without heat). The water content of the white is 12 percent or less and the sun-dried white may have less of the herb's beneficial components as the root enzymes may break down these components during the drying process. Red ginseng is a reddish color and thought to be less vulnerable to decay than white. It is steamed, peeled and either dried or sun dried. Red ginseng can also be marinated, but this creates a brittle root.

Ginseng occurs in the wild but can also be cultivated. There are a number of cultivation methods, including what is known as "wild cultivation," in which humans actually plant the ginseng in the wild, then allow the ginseng to grow like its wild counterparts. Wild ginseng grows naturally in the mountains but is rare and becoming endangered due to high demand.

Ginseng is consumed raw, steamed, in energy and other drinks, and in tea. When used for culinary needs, it is usually dried and used whole or sliced. The leaf is sometimes also used. Ginseng may be used in side dishes, soups, tea and alcoholic beverages.

Medicinally, the roots are used in traditional Chinese medicine. However, it is the leaves and stems that contain the higher amounts of phytochemicals than the roots and are also easier to harvest. It is also used as a supplement in various forms, including oil and tablet form. There are two significant compounds in ginseng: ginsenosides and gintoxin. These components complement each other and provide health benefits, with the ginsenosides helping to reducing inflammation and provide antioxidants.

Ginseng can boost energy and fight fatigue, increase energy production and lower the oxidative damage in cells; it can give feelings of calmness and mood improvement to healthy people as well as those with Alzheimer's; it can even help with improving memory, behavior and other brain functions. Red ginseng may help to strengthen the immune system of people with cancer.

Both American and Asian ginseng have been shown to boost insulin production, enhance the uptake of blood sugar and improve pancreatic cell function. Fermented red ginseng is the most effective, as it has a live bacteria that turns the ginsenosides into an easier to absorb, more potent form.

One of the easiest and most common ways to consume ginseng is as a tea, and there are a few ways that it can be prepared:

Grate or grind dried root into coarse flakes. Place 1–2 tablespoons into a tea ball, tea bag or simply drop it into the bottom of a mug (if you use this method, you will need to strain the tea before drinking). Add hot, but not quite boiling water. Let steep for 3 minutes.

Alternatively, take seven pieces of thinly sliced peeled ginger root. Place slices in a mug and coat with a generous amount of honey. Allow this mixture to sit, between 10–15 minutes. Pour hot, but not boiling water over the mixture. Steep 5–10 minutes. Remove slices before drinking. If you find that this ginseng tea is a bit over powering, it can be mixed with green tea, using the proportions of your choice.

Ginseng is considered safe; however, as with any herb, there may be interactions with some drugs that reduce their effectiveness. It is also possible that extended use of ginseng can decrease its effectiveness. For maximum benefit, it is recommended that ginseng be taken in cycles, meaning to use it for 2–3 weeks, then take a break of 2–3 weeks.

Although ginseng is generally safe in larger quantities, it is possible to experience an overdose. Symptoms of acute overdose include bleeding; a mild overdose's symptoms can include dry mouth and lips, fidgeting, irritability, excitability, headache and insomnia, to name a few. A gross overdose can include nausea, vomiting, irritability, fever, restlessness, seizures and incontinence (both urinary and bowel).

Another thing to keep in mind, should you decide that you want to harvest your own in the wild, is that harvesting ginseng root on most state and all national park lands is illegal. The 19 states where it is legal also have restrictions, such as the plants being at least 5 years old, harvesting only during season, and only by permit.

Hops

Also called common hop, from H. lupulus angenus Humlus, hops are known for their use as a flavoring, bitter and stability agent for beer, with the first documented use of the herb in beer found in the 9th century in the Hallertau region of Germany. Cultivation of hops in the United States began in 1629 by Dutch and English farmers. Today, hops are cultivated in most temperate climates. Since hops like the same soil as potatoes, it has been found that a good hop can be naturally produced in many of these areas.

Hops are a climbing herbaceous perennial. In the hop field or yard, the plants are usually trained to grow vertically on tall strings. The hops themselves, also called seed cones or strobiles, are the flowers of the hop plant. Male and female flowers develop on separate plants. As pollinated seeds are considered undesirable for use in brewing, only female plants are grown in the hop yard. There are many different varieties of hops that are used with particular beer styles.

Hops are also used in other beverages, such as herbal teas and soft drinks, and it can be used medicinally. The Cherokee used hops as a sedative, analgesic and anti-rheumatic, among other things. The Delaware used hops for relaxation, as a sleep aid, and to treat toothache and earache. The Navajo used hops for coughs and cold, while the Dakota found value in its use for gastrointestinal issues and wound healing.

Today, it still is used in similar ways, being taken orally for anxiety and irritability, sleep disorders, tension, excitability, ADHD, and nervousness.

The folk remedy of hops pillows is popular for sleeplessness, due to its relaxing effect. Simply make a small sachet (3 x 5 inches or as needed) and fill with dried hops. Place inside your pillow, pillow case or set beside you when you sleep. For most, hops will provide a good sleep; however, if you find you might be having less than expected results, discontinue use and talk with your local herbalist and doctor about your needs. If you have other issues, such as sleeplessness due to depression, the use of hops is not usually recommended.

Hops may also be used as a tincture or a powder. Hops tincture can be used as follows: at a dose of ½–1 teaspoon as needed, up to 3 times per day for an adult, once per day for children. The tincture may be added to hot tea to evaporate the alcohol before you consume.

Hops are known as safe; although, as with most any herbal remedy, you should check with your doctor and/or herbalist before you use them, especially if you are using any medications or with children. Hops are also quite toxic to dogs, so make sure the herb is safely kept away from them.

Horehound *(Marrubium vulgare)*

Also called white horehound or common horehound, horehound is a flowering plant from the mint family. It can be found in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Europe. Horehound is an herbaceous perennial that has gray leaves and can grow 10–18 inches tall. The leaves are less than an inch long with a densely crinkled surface covered with soft hairs. White flowers form on the upper part of the main stem. The parts of the plant that grow above ground are considered edible.

In folk medicine, horehound candy is used to aid in digestion, relieve inflammation and soothe sore throats. Horehound juice is used to make

candy, while the extract is used for cough syrup and lozenges. An infusion of horehound entails steeping 1 tablespoon of the herb into ½ cup water. You can make a syrup by using 1 pound of sugar to 1 pint of infusion, cooking until the sugar has dissolved. Horehound also works as a natural grasshopper repellent, making it another good plant for around the garden.

Hyssop *(Hyssopus officinalis)*

A herbaceous plant native to Europe, the Middle East and the Caspian Sea region, hyssop is part of the mint family, with an intense mint scent. The entire species is drought resistant and thrives in full sun and warm climates.

Hyssop can be cultivated through seed, cuttings, or divisions, and is a brightly colored shrub that is easy to grow. It is an ornamental that butterflies, hummingbirds and bees are attracted to, and can grow 12–24 inches high, with a woody stem base with branches coming from it. It has dark green lanceolate leaves and, in the summer, will produce bunches of pink, blue, or white fragrant flowers that ripen to a dry fruit. Flowering occurs from June through August.

Once the plant reaches 18 inches in height, it is mature enough to begin cutting back the tops to keep the leaves tender or cut to 4 inches from the ground. With optimal conditions, you could have an end of spring harvest or beginning of fall harvest. Hang the harvested plant or plant pieces in a well-ventilated area to dry; to prevent oxidation and discoloration, do not expose the herb to the sun. For a medicinal harvest, cut the stems just before the flowers open.

For culinary uses, hyssop works nicely in salads, with fruit, in soups and stews and it is favored by bee keepers to produce hyssop honey. The leaves are an aromatic condiment that can be used to flavor liquor and are part of the ingredients of Chartreuse.

In herbal medicine, hyssop is a soothing expectorant and cough suppressant that has been used for centuries to increase circulation. It has also been used to stimulate the gastrointestinal system. Hyssop is used as an infusion (1 teaspoon dried herb to ½ cup water), a decoction (1 teaspoon herb with 1 cup water) and as an essential oil. However, hyssop should not be used continuously for an extended length of time, and the essential oil must be used with caution and under the guidance of a professional, as it has been known to cause seizures in both adults and children.

Juniper

The juniper is a coniferous plant in the genus Juniperus and is part of the cypress family Cupressaceae. Junipers vary in size and shape, with trees reaching heights of up to 130 feet tall, depending on the variety. Junipers can be grown from seed but take 2–3 years to germinate. If you are growing for the berries the juniper is known for, you will need both male and female shrubs, or else there will be no fruit. It is likely easiest to purchase young plants from local nurseries for this reason.

Junipers flower between April and June. They produce a berry-like fruit that is green the first year and turns a bluish/black or dark purple the following year. The bark is chocolate brown in color with red, needle shaped leaves.

Harvesting juniper is not difficult; the leaves and branches can be harvested at any time. However, they are prickly, so it is advisable to wear gloves. The berries will not be ready for harvesting until fall, and must be ripe to do so (when they are blue or purple in color). If they are green, they are immature and need to be left alone. When the berries are harvested, let them dry in the sun if at all possible. When they are dried, the berries will turn black.

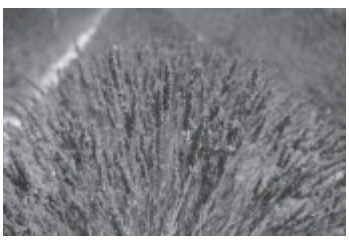
Juniper berries are too bitter to eat in their raw state and are usually sold dried for this reason. They are crushed before use to release their flavor. The berries are used in a wide variety of culinary dishes and are the primary flavoring in gin. In fact, the name "gin" comes from the Dutch word *jenever*, meaning "juniper". A sauce made from the berries is a popular addition to wild game dishes, as are the berries themselves. Juniper berries can be added sparingly to sauerkraut, pâté and some hors d'oeuvres. They can act as a substitute for bay leaves in sauces, stews, and marinades, substituting three or four berries for each bay leaf. The berries also work well with garlic, parsley, and fennel and can be used to make jellies and syrup.

Although mostly known for their culinary uses, juniper berries also have medicinal properties. The berries have antioxidant properties and, in folk medicine, are thought to help with bronchitis and arthritis. Native Americans believe in the cleansing and healing powers of juniper. They use it to relieve arthritis, keep infection at bay, and to take care of wounds and illness. They would also tie steaming bundles of boughs to sore limbs.

Arthritis, ulcers, wounds, and bruises have been known to be relieved using juniper poultices and rubs. To make a rub, simmer berries in olive oil. To use as a poultice, smash the berries and apply to the area of need. A handful of leaves added to a warm bath can be used to soothe aching muscles. To make an infusion, combine 1 teaspoon of crushed berries with ½ cup of water. Simmer for 5–10 minutes in a covered pot. Sweeten with honey or raw sugar, if preferred.

Lavender *(Lavendula)*

There are actually 47 known species of this flowering plant from the mint family Lamiaceae, with some of the more well-known being English lavender, French lavender and Spanish lavender. It is used medicinally, in cooking, and as an essential oil.



Lavender, a perennial, can be cultivated through seed and cuttings. Plants are also available at most nurseries, although if you want something really out of the ordinary you may have to hunt for it. Lavender does best in well-drained, dry soils and in full sun (the stems may weaken without it) with good air circulation. Lavender will also grow in containers with good drainage.

The leaf shapes of lavender are diverse and depend on the specific plant. The flowers come in as whorls and rise above the foliage on spikes, but there may even be differences here, depending on the plant. Harvest time depends on the plant and what the harvest will be used for.

In the kitchen, English lavender is the clear favorite, especially its flower buds. They may be used fresh or dry, but the drier they get, the more potent they become, so as they dry, use them more sparingly. Lavender is used in goat and sheep cheeses, in herb blends and teas, and as part of baked goods, desserts, and sorbets. The leaves can be used a substitution for rosemary in many dishes, as well as in breads. When used in teas, the leaves are milder than the flowers. The buds are also used to make lavender sugar.

To make your own lavender sugar, simply place dried lavender flowers in a cup of sugar and place in a food processor. Blend until the lavender is finely ground. Blend in another cup of sugar. Store in an airtight jar in a cool, dry place. The flowers will flavor the sugar. A popular monofloral honey (a honey produced from the nectar from one plant species) is also produced with lavender. The flowers can also be candied.

Medicinally, lavender is typically used in an essential oil, though it is sometimes found as an infusion. The herbs and essential oils are used in baths and compresses for treating insomnia, headaches and even burns. The essential oil has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties; it also acts as a natural mosquito repellent. The oils, especially that of English lavender, are used in balms, salves and perfumes. Some lavender oils are better than others, so pay attention to what you are purchasing.

Lavender also makes a fragrant ornamental, especially planted where people can brush up against the plant. It can be dried and used in potpourri, pillow sachets and as a moth deterrent.

Lemon Balm *(Melissa officinalis)*

Lemon balm is a perennial herbaceous plant from the mint family Lamiacae, native to south central Europe, the Mediterranean Basin, Iran and central Asia. It is one of the most fragrant herbs in the world, and has been cultivated since the 16th century.

Lemon balm is a *very* easy plant to cultivate, whether through seed, divisions or cuttings. It does need light, but it also likes shade. In fact, it's so easy to grow that it has a habit of taking over, so plant accordingly. Lemon balm grows 28–59 inches high, with ovate toothed leaves that give off a mild lemon and mint scent. It is a very clean, though not medicinal smell. The flowers are small and white and appear about mid-summer.

The leaves are used to flavor teas, in salad, with meats and poultry, and as flavorings and garnish. They are sometimes combined with spearmint or peppermint. A few bruised leaves placed in cola makes a nice substitute if fresh lemon is not available. The plant is used to attract honey bees for honey production.

Lemon balm is also grown for essential oil. The essential oils, extracts and teas of lemon balm are used in both alternative and traditional medicine as well as in aromatherapy. It is used to treat the gastrointestinal tract, nervous system, liver and bile. The tea is calming, soothing and uplifting, and is great for external application on insect bites. Strong tea added to bathwater can help ease everything from mosquito bites to bee stings and can help reduce redness and swelling.

Lemon Grass *(Cymbopogon)*

Lemon grass originated in the tropic regions of Asia, Africa, and Australia, and is known for its lemon-like flavor and taste. It is a culinary and medicinal herb, though its primary applications are in cooking and as

potpourri. Lemon grass is an important flavoring for Thai and Vietnamese cooking.

Lemon grass has long, thin gray-green leaves that have a scallion look to them, but with a more wood-like base. It can be grown in gardens, and starter plants are typically available. The plant may also be found in most any place that carries Asian food ingredients. Lemon grass is used in teas, sauces, soups and curry.

The white base of the plant is what is typically used in cooking and may be used fresh or dry. To preserve a fresh bunch of lemon grass, store tightly wrapped in plastic, refrigerated, for up to 2 weeks. The essential oil of lemon grass is called citral and is the same oil found in lemon peel. This is what gives lemon grass its flavor and taste.

Marjoram *(Origanum majorana)*

Also known as sweet marjoram and knotted marjoram, marjoram is a tender perennial, meaning a perennial that is cold sensitive. The herb is indigenous to southern Turkey and Cyprus. It was a symbol of happiness to the Greeks and Romans; the early Greeks wove marjoram into funeral wreaths as well as planted the herb on the graves of loved ones to symbolize their happiness during and after life.

Marjoram is a bushy plant, with small peliolated leaves. The plant can get a little woody as it gets older, so when the plant is well established, begin cutting off tops to keep the plant bushy. Allow the cut tops to dry slowly.

Marjoram is cultivated from seeds; however, it can be a slow grower, so if you live in a cold climate, either start the seeds early indoors and transplant the seedlings when the danger of frost is past, or purchase seedlings/small plants for the garden, planting only when frost season is over.

Marjoram's leaves are used fresh or dried in cooking. It is often used in soups, stews, dressings and sauces. Marjoram can be substituted for oregano and vice versa.

As a healing herb, marjoram should be used with caution due to its strength. The dried leaves can be made into an herbal pillow and a lotion can be made with the fresh herb in olive oils. Infusions are made with 2 teaspoons fresh herb and 1 cup water.

Mint

All mints are part of the Lamiaceae family, and most are perennials. Mint grows wild worldwide and is known as a symbol of hospitality. There are over 30 species of mint to choose from when deciding on what to plant. Some of these include apple mint, pineapple mint, chocolate mint, ginger mint, grapefruit mint, orange mint, among others. However, peppermint and spearmint are the two most popular and most used for culinary and medicinal needs, although spearmint is used mostly for flavor.

Mints can be easily propagated from cuttings, which is actually the easiest way to grow mint unless you are willing to purchase plants. It thrives best in partial shade with good moisture. Once the plant becomes established and begins to grow, frequent cuttings will keep the plant at its

best. In the winter, it can be taken down close to the ground and, in areas where winters are severe, mulched. Mint is another plant that will take over a space, so plant accordingly.

When harvesting the plant for culinary or medicinal use, the leaves should be evenly colored and not wilting. For some mints, like peppermint, the leaves should be harvested when young, as the older leaves tend to get a bit bitter. That said, while mint leaves are best used fresh, they can also be dried for future use. To keep cut mint fresh, place the stems in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top. Refrigerate for up to a week, changing the water every few days.

For both culinary and medicinal use, mints can be used fresh, dry, as an extract, or an essential oil. With the range of flavors mints come in, there can be a range of different jams and jellies, sauces, and teas and candies. When comparing peppermint and spearmint for culinary use, however, spearmint is the more mild and versatile option. Mint leaves can also be chopped, placed in ice trays with a little water, and frozen. The cubes can then be used in drinks or other dishes where mint may be needed.

For medicinal use, peppermint and spearmint are used most frequently, though apple mint is better for nausea and upset stomach. Peppermint, however, is medicinally the most effective of the mints, though it may be too strong for infants and young children. Peppermint is a source of menthol, which is responsible for the benefits that the herb provides. In fact, oil of peppermint has anywhere between 50–70 percent menthol. As a tea, peppermint soothes the stomach and relieves headaches as well as easing cold and flu symptoms. In aromatherapy, peppermint also helps relieve headaches (this can be as an oil or a candle made with peppermint oil). Peppermint oil helps with flatulence by drinking tea or placing 2–3 drops of food grade peppermint oil on a sugar cube.

Both spearmint and peppermint tea help with insomnia and chewing on the leaves or stems can help get rid of bad breath. The use of mints after a meal also helps to promote digestion.

Mints are great for companion planting, as both spearmint and peppermint repel aphids. Mice and other rodents do not like peppermint, spearmint or penny royal (a mint which must be used with caution, as neither pregnant humans nor animals should come into contact with penny royal). Mints of all types are naturally excellent aromatics, and when fresh

or dried can be used in sachets, potpourris, simmers or in live or dry arrangements.

Nasturtium

Native to South and Central America, the nasturtium is from the genus Tropaeolum, the only genus in the family of the Tropaeolaceae. It is also known by other names, such as Jesuit's Cress, due to the fact that the Jesuits were known to use nasturtium in salads, and Indian Cress, as the plant was introduced from the Americas (known at that time as the Indies) and used as a base for salads.

There are 80 species of nasturtiums, all of which are annuals. They are easy to grow in either containers or as ground cover, and are a popular ornamental, culinary and medicinal plant. The plant starts easily from seed and, in cold climates, should be started indoors 4–6 weeks before the last spring frost. However, if you prefer to plant directly them in the ground, as they *are* fast growers, seeds can go in early spring. Plant the seeds in holes ½ inch deep, 10–12 inches apart. You should see seedlings starting in 7 days or less.

Plant them in areas of full sun for the best results. They will tolerate partial shade but may not bloom as well. Nasturtiums prefer poorer soil and usually need no fertilization. In fact, soil that is too fertile can result in more foliage with less blooms. When looking for a spot to plant your nasturtium seedlings, let them pull double duty acting as a companion plant for your pumpkins, cucumbers, radishes, cabbages, melons and broccoli, as they will also repel some pests while attracting predatory insects until harvest.

Nasturtium flowers have five petals and are zygomorphic, meaning they can be divided into equal halves, but only along one line. The flowers have a funnel-shaped nectar spur on the back. The fruit is nut-like with three

single seed segments. The plants need regular watering and pruning off the dead flowers will prolong blooming.

Seeds may be harvested, dried and saved for the following year. Allow them to dry on the vine and fall. Collect, clean, make sure they are totally dry (otherwise they will mold) and then store in an envelope in a cool, dry place.

The flowers produce both vitamin C and lutein. They have a slight peppery taste and are usually used fresh in salads and as an edible garnish. However, before consuming the flowers the pistils should be removed; otherwise, you may be left with a bitter taste. The green, unripened seed pod can be harvested, washed, and put into a spiced vinegar and used as a substitute for capers. Simply pour spiced vinegar over green buds (using the spiced vinegar recipe of your choice) and seal. Let the mixture sit at least one month before use. It is best to use a glass container instead of plastic.

Medicinally, nasturtium has been used for respiratory and urinary tract infections as well applied directly to the skin for mild muscle pain. It is also a good disinfectant, wound healer and inflammation reducer. It has also said to stimulate hair growth.

Nasturtium can be used as a tea, poultice, or compress. Make a simple tea by steeping 1–2 teaspoons of fresh leaves in boiling water for 15 minutes and strain. Adults can consume up to 3 cups in a day. A compress can also be made from this tea by soaking a clean cloth in it and applying the saturated cloth where needed. A poultice is made by bruising nasturtium leaves, placing them between two pieces of thin gauze and applying to the skin. Although nasturtium is considered safe, do not use if you have stomach or intestinal ulcers or kidney disease. It may cause skin irritation if used directly on the skin for long periods of time.

Oregano *(Origanum vulgare)*

Oregano is a flowering plant in the mint family, related to sweet marjoram. It is a perennial but can be grown as an annual in colder climates, as it may or may not survive winters. It is native to western and southwestern Eurasia and the Mediterranean region. There are many subspecies and strains with tastes from spicy to sweet and everything in between.

Cultivation of oregano can be started by seed, cuttings, or root divisions. Seeds can be sown directly into the soil so long as the temperature stays above 45°F. When planting seed, do not cover with soil. Oregano can grow up to 7 inches tall, on average, and has opposite leaves on erect spikes.

To harvest, simply snip the sprigs whenever needed, and when the plant begins to bud vigorously, cut the plant down to the lower leaves. Hang and dry in a cool dark area. Strip the dry leaves and store in a container out of the light in a cool, dry area for up to 6 months. To maintain fresh oregano for up to a week, place the herb, stem down, in water, cover with a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator, changing the water every few days. That being said, the leaves are actually more flavorful dry than fresh.

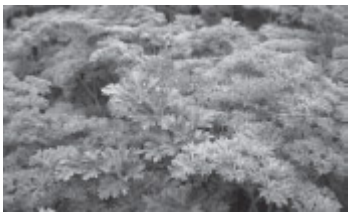
Culinary uses for oregano include sauces (especially tomato), omelets, breads, vegetables, pizza, poultry and much more. It combines wonderfully with garlic, thyme, parsley and olive oil. Marjoram may be used as an oregano substitute, but because of its milder flavor, more marjoram may be needed.

Medicinally, oregano tea is used for easing chronic colds and asthma. A few drops of oregano oil on a cotton ball (a longstanding folk remedy) can be used for a toothache. Leaf infusions are also recommended for indigestion, cough and headache, and poultices are still used for pain and swelling. A bag of oregano leaves in a hot bath helps with aching joints and stiffness (although some believe it is actually the hot water and not the oregano that helps).

Parsley

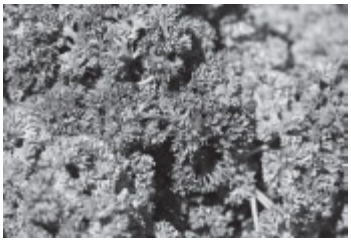
Parsley is another herb that people always seem to recognize right away. There are many cultivar groups for parsley, but the two main types used are flat leafed and curly. Flat leaf is preferred by many gardeners as it is a more tolerant plant to rain and sun. The curly leaf is thick and green, and while it

is a viable culinary herb as well, most don't use it because it doesn't taste as good and is on the tougher side.



Flat leaf parsley

Parsley is an easy herb to cultivate, whether through seeds or by purchasing plants for transplanting. When using seed, sow them when the soil reaches 50°F. It is a hardy plant but will go to seed during the second year. To keep a plant productive, cut back the full length of the outer stem and remove any flower stalks so that it doesn't go to seed. Dry the harvested plant thoroughly in the shade or indoors and store in an airtight container.



Curly Parsley

Parsley is widely used in American, Middle Eastern, Brazilian and European cuisine. Parsley works well with most but not all foods (such as sweets).

The medicinal properties of parsley include antispasmodic, diuretic, and expectorant. Parsley tea and juice is used for asthma, coughs and jaundice. Parsley is a source of flavonoids and antioxidants, including luteolin, folic acid, apigenin, vitamin K, multiple B vitamins, vitamin C, and vitamin A. In fact, parsley has more vitamin A and vitamin C per volume than an orange. The root also has laxative properties.

Medicinally, parsley can be used as an infusion, decoction, and oil, although the oil may be toxic in large quantities. Parsley is also a natural breath sweetener due to its high chlorophyll content. Do *not* use parsley for any medicinal needs if kidney inflammation exists.

Purslane *(Portulaca oleracea)*

Also known as common purslane, red root, and pursley, purslane is an annual succulent. The leaves are crisp, rich in moisture and a bit tart. It is widely used in eastern Mediterranean countries and has been found at many prehistoric archaeological sites.

The plant has smooth, reddish stems and leaves that cluster at the joints and ends of the stem. The flowers have five parts and will appear in any season, depending on the rain. They open in the morning and close in the evening. Seeds are found in small pods that open when the seeds mature. It is best to harvest in the morning when the malic acid content is high, giving a tangier taste to the plant.

In cuisine, purslane is eaten as a leafy vegetable and used in salads, stir fries, soups, and stews. It can also be cooked like spinach. The stems, leaves, and flower buds are all edible. It is worth noting that purslane has more Omega 3 fatty acid than any other leafy vegetable. It also has vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E vitamin B, carotenoids, and minerals.

Rosemary (Rosemarinus officinalis)

Rosemary, a member of the mint family, is a woody perennial with evergreen-like needles that are leathery and opposite. It has an evergreen-like scent and a fibrous root system. The flowers can be white, purple, pink or blue, and bloom from April through May, occasionally blooming later in cooler climates.

Cultivation of rosemary can begin with seed, but that presents certain difficulties. The best options are usually from cuttings, layering, or buying seedlings from a nursery. As it doesn't transplant well, rosemary should be planted where you want it to stay. Rosemary *will* grow in a container; however, it cannot be over or under watered, and the branches must be misted on a regular basis.

Rosemary can be harvested at any time; however, you must use caution not to remove more than 20 percent of the growth at one time. As with most herbs, using fresh is best, but if you need to store the harvest, sprigs can be dried and leaves stripped and stored in an airtight jar out of sunlight. They can also be frozen.

Rosemary is a staple herb in the kitchen, used in stews, with meats, and in breads, sauces and marinades. It is one of the few herbs where you can substitute the same amount of dried herb with fresh. Sprigs can even be tied together to be used as a sauce brush.

In medicine, rosemary is used as an antiseptic, diuretic and anti-spasmodic. Salves made from rosemary oil are used for eczema, bruises, and wounds. It is used more externally than internally, due to the danger of poisoning, which can be fatal if an excessive amount is taken. For this reason, the use of rosemary as a medicinal should be done with caution.

Rosemary is also an excellent landscape ornamental. It makes great topiaries and is a bee attractor, whose nectar subsequently makes good honey. The leaves and flowers make a yellow dye when using an alum mordant.

In terms of uses around the house, those who want a natural moth repellent for your closet or drawer need look no further! You can use 1 cup each of dried rosemary, lavender and crushed cinnamon bark to keep pests out of your cupboards and dressers. For extra protection, you can also add a cup of cedar shavings, although this is optional. Place in a cloth bag and tie closed.

Sage *(Salvia officinalis)*

Sage is yet another member of the mint family. Native to the Mediterranean, it is also known as common sage, garden sage, and culinary sage. There are many varieties, sizes, and colors of flower and leaf. The plant has a squarish, lightly hairy stem on a woody base. The long oval leaves are opposite. The flowers can be red, white, purple and blue.

Sage may be cultivated from seed, divisions, or cuttings. However, it is also a very easy plant to find. The seeds store poorly, so germination reliability needs to be checked, and it can take a long time to start a large plant from seed, so bear all this in mind when considering how to fill your need for sage.

The plants should be pruned to keep from going to seed, but usually the plant needs to be replaced every 3–4 years as it can become woody and less productive. Leaves should be collected before the plant flowers. To harvest sage, snip leaves from the plant. To dry, spread the leaves out on a cloth or paper, or tie the leaves together and hang. Store them in an airtight container. Note that sage can be killed by cold, wet winters.

In terms of cooking, some consider sage to be one of the essential herbs, along with parsley and rosemary. Sage can be used fresh, ground, dried whole, or in a rub. Sage is eaten fresh in salads and cooked in omelets and fritters. It is also used in stuffings and sausages, and fried for garnish.

Medicinally, sage is used in lotions and herbal baths to stimulate the skin, as well as for a soothing aftershave. It is used as an astringent and dandruff remedy and is considered an antispasmodic. Sage tea has been used for asthma, colds, mouth sores, sore throat, and gingivitis. However, while sage is still used medicinally to a point today, caution must be used as excessive use can cause symptoms of poisoning.

Sage is a natural dye, giving a gray-green or yellow hue depending on what mordant is used. It is an aromatic, used in soap, cosmetics, and

perfume. It is also used as an insect repellent and smudge stick. Finally, sage can be used dried in wreaths and potpourri.

Savory

There are many varieties of savory, two of which are the most popular: summer savory (*Satureja hortensis*), which is an annual, preferred for culinary use but also used medicinally; and winter savory (*Satvreja montana*), a perennial which can also be used for cooking and medicine, but is less common.

Summer savory

Winter savory is a perennial, semi-evergreen herb. It is native to the warm regions of the Mediterranean, Africa and southern Europe. Winter savory has dark green opposite leaves, and its flowers are pink, white, or a pale lavender, and appear from July to October. They are smaller than the flowers of summer savory. Winter savory makes for a good companion plant to beans and roses, as it helps keep the bean weevils away and prevents aphids and mildew. Summer savory is the better known of the two; it is less bitter than winter savory and usually preferred for cooking. It has slender green leaves and lilac flowers that bloom from June to September.

Savory is easy to grow, whether from seed or cuttings. As with most annuals, summer savory grows faster from seed, while its perennial counterpart grows slower, and either can be grown in containers. Harvesting may begin for summer savory once it reaches 6 inches in height by snipping at the plant, and can continue throughout the season. If the plant is flowering, cut the entire plant: once it goes to seed, the plant is done. Use summer savory fresh or dry. Dry on its stem by tying it into bunches and

hanging it in a cool, dark place. When thoroughly dry, strip the leaves from the stem and store it in an airtight container. Since it is a perennial, winter savory will go dormant in the winter and should not be cut back in the spring. Harvest by snipping and use fresh or dry. When harvesting winter savory for medicinal use, it should be harvested in the summer so that the flowers can be used.

For cooking, summer savory is preferred over winter, although they are both used in practically the same way. Summer savory has a sweeter taste and a more delicate aroma. It is used in seasonings for grilled meats and dressings, and is an ingredient in “herbs de Provence”. Winter savory works well with beans and meats, especially poultry, and is also used in soups, sauces, and stuffings. Winter savory does have a stronger flavor (which is a reason that summer savory is normally preferred), but it loses much of this potency during the cooking process.

Medicinally, winter savory is said to have aromatic carminative (preventing the formation of gas), antiseptic and digestive benefits. It is used as an expectorant and as a poultice on insect bites and stings. An ointment can also be made from it to soothe arthritic joints. Teas made from savory are considered a safe remedy for most stomach and intestinal disorders. It can be used as an astringent and sore throat gargle. For a simple infusion, use 2–4 tablespoons of dry savory (either type) to 1 cup of water.

Scented Geranium

The scented geranium is not really a geranium, and gets its name more for its resemblance to one (though it also comes from the same botanical family). It comes from the genus Pelargonium and is a tender perennial or annual in Canada and most of the United States.

Although the leaves definitely resemble geraniums, the forms and texture of scented geranium can vary widely, including smooth, velvety or even

sticky. The plant can be grown from seed but is also very easy to propagate from cuttings. The plant can be scented in ways that resemble others, including rose, lemon, nutmeg, citronella, various mints, cinnamon, ginger, pineapple, and even orange or coconut. The plants and their scents are a wonderful addition to any garden, and because they are annuals in cold climates, they can and should be grown in containers so they can be brought inside for the winter, especially if you're growing a hard-to-find scent.

Scented geraniums have a place in cuisine, medicine, and as an insect repellent. For culinary use, it is usually seen in sweet dishes. Scented geraniums can be used in jellies, sorbets, fruit punch, sangria, and sweet vinegar, and its ground dried leaves have their uses as a spice and, of course, for making tea.

The leaves can be dried to keep for later use. Pick leaves shortly after blooming, as this is when they will have their best scent. Lay the freshly picked leaves flat on a paper towel, lined cookie sheet, or screen until dry. Store dried leaves in an airtight container in a cool location, but do not refrigerate or freeze.

You can make a flavored sugar using scented geranium leaves (cinnamon, rose, mint, or lemon work best). In a large container, stack clean, dried, bruised leaves between 1-inch layers of sugar (one leaf between each layer). To bruise leaves, simply hit them with a small blunt object to damage the leaf. This will release the oils and scent. Place the filled container in a warm place for 2–4 weeks. When ready, sift out the geranium leaves and place in a clean, dry container. This sugar can be substituted all or in part for white sugar in baking recipes, as well as used in teas.

Medicinally, tea made from scented geraniums has a calming effect, just like chamomile. When ingested, it can help with stomach aches, headaches and diarrhea. Alternatively, you can place a few leaves in a bottle of witch hazel, let it sit for a few weeks, then use the mixture as a skin toner. Essential oils of scented geraniums can also be purchased. They can be used as part of insect repellents, astringents, perfumes, and aroma therapy. Rose geranium is one of the most common, and like any essential oil, should not be used directly on the skin unless it is added into a carrier oil.

Tarragon *(Artemisia dracunculus)*

Tarragon is a perennial herb from the composite family, growing wild across Eurasia and North America and cultivated for both medicinal and culinary use. There are a number of varieties, with French tarragon seen as the best for cooking. Tarragon can grow up to 59 inches tall, with slender branched stems and glossy, green, lanceolate leaves. Flowers each have up to 40 yellow florets (though the preferred French tarragon will rarely produce flowers).

The roots of tarragon plants, known as rhizomes, are the best way to cultivate the plant. In fact, for some varieties (like French tarragon), because the seeds are sterile, divisions or cuttings are the only option. If you do have seed, but are not sure what you have, it is best to test germinate the seeds first, especially before you begin to harvest seed for use in planting the following year. If you live in an area of heavy frost, either mulch for the winter or pot in the fall and bring indoors until spring.

It is best that tarragon is harvested just before flowering. Trim throughout the season, then cut to 1 inch from the ground. The herb can be stored fresh, dried, or frozen, or you can make tarragon vinegar by simply stuffing a bottle with tarragon and adding white vinegar (or a vinegar of your choice).

In cooking, tarragon is one of the four fine herbs (those being parsley, chives, tarragon and chervil). It is also one of the ingredients in Béarnaise. Use with chicken (stuff sprigs or leaves of tarragon and garlic under the skin before roasting), fish, and eggs. Tarragon can be added to soups and stews, but only during the last 15 minutes of cooking so that the herb doesn't become bitter.

Medicinally, tarragon tea stimulates the appetite, especially when caused by illness. An infusion of tarragon is made with ½ teaspoon of dried plant in ½ cup water.

Thyme

As with a good many of the herbs discussed in this book, there are a number of varieties of thyme. French, English, and lemon are some of the varieties seen the most; however, common thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) or garden thyme, is the most frequently used. Thyme is a part of the mint family and native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean. A perennial, thyme can grow anywhere from 6–10 inches, depending on the variety. It has opposite leaves and blooms from May through September.

Thyme can be cultivated by seed, cuttings and divisions. It likes hot and sunny locations and is best planted in the spring. Harvest it by clipping the plant, which also keeps it bushy. At some point, however, thyme may become spindly and may need to be replaced.

The plant may be used fresh or dry, as sprigs, cut, powdered or whole. Store dried herbs in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months. That being said, thyme presents a bit of a quandary for storage: fresh thyme is more flavorful than dried, but has a short shelf life (however, it can be frozen).

Thyme is a popular culinary herb, often used with fish, vegetables, meats, cream sauces, and soups. It is used as sprigs, in bunches, and dried. It is also a main ingredient in a bouquet garnie, a bunch of herbs usually tied or placed in a cheesecloth bag and dropped into pots to flavor whatever dish is being cooked. Being tied or bagged makes it easy to remove the herbs after cooking.

In medicine, thyme is often placed in baths for rheumatic issues, swelling, and bruising. Thyme tincture and teas are good for nausea and throat issues (including laryngitis), as well as bronchial issues. If overused, thyme can become toxic, so it must be used carefully.

Uva Ursi *(Arctostaphylos Uva Ursi)*

One of the more unusually named herbs, Uva Ursi takes its name from its fruits, which bears love— hence the nickname bear's grape. Uva Ursi is part of the Ericacea family, and is also called bearberry, sandberry, hog cranberry and kinnikinick.

Uva Ursi is a trailing shrub evergreen with red berries found in alpine forests in North America and Europe. The plant grows 6–12 inches tall, 3–15 inches wide and is matted. It likes full sun, although it is not tolerant of high heat, and can live in poor soil but prefers a well-drained, acidic, sandy soil.

Uva Ursi is a slow grower with short reddish-brown creeping branches. The flowers are bell shaped and can be white or pink. The berries, which grow in clusters, are edible but sour and are a shiny pink or red. When grown in the home garden, it is often used as a ground cover, making it good for drought areas and landscapes that need salt tolerant plants. Uva Ursi will also attract hummingbirds.

Propagation of the plant can be done from seed and cuttings. The plant can be tough to transplant and establish so, if possible, seed where you want the plant to live, instead of potting first.

Even though the berries are edible, only the leaves are used for medicinal purposes. The leaves contain diuretic chemicals, astringents, allantoin and tannic acid, with the former helping to promote the growth of new cells and wound healing and the latter including antifungal and anti-inflammatory properties. Uva Ursi also contains arbutin, a compound that can drain excess water from cells, causing an antiseptic effect on (urinary) mucous membranes, which in turn help with infections of the tract.

Uva Ursi is commercially available in crushed or powder form. A common treatment for bladder and related infections, it reduces the bacteria in urine, reduces swelling and acts as an astringent on tissue. Uva Ursi is also used for joint issues, including arthritis.

Uva Ursi should only be used under the direction of a doctor or experienced herbalist because dosage depends on age, health, and other factors. Dosages should be monitored carefully and should not be taken for prolonged periods as it may be unsafe. Young children, pregnant women, nursing women, people with severe liver and kidney disease, Crohn's disease, digestive issues and high blood pressure should not use this herb.

Willow

Willow is the original aspirin. Coming from the genus Salix, of which there are about 400 species, most are still known as willows (though some of the narrow leaf shrub species are known as osier, while broader leaf species are known as sallow). Most willows can easily be grown from cuttings.

Willow leaves are edible, but don't all taste good. They are, however, 7–10 times higher in vitamin C content than an orange. Rather, it is the bark of the willow tree that is most used, as it acts (and tastes) like aspirin, and is used in the same manner. This is due to the bark containing salicin, of which aspirin is a synthetic formula. The bark of several species of willow are used, specifically from the branches of 2–3-year-old willows.

Harvesting the bark of the willow is really quite easy and straightforward. Cut a few young, small branches, remove the leaves, and then strip the bark. This can be done at any time of the year, though the easiest time of the year to separate the bark from the branch is in the spring. Dry the bark at room temperature in a dry area. Spread out on a cookie sheet or screen and stir frequently. When the bark is totally dry, place it in a jar and store in a cool, dry place.

Willow acts as an astringent to swelling, as an antimicrobial and as a pain reliever, like aspirin. The best way to use willow bark is through tea and

tincture, although a poultice can also be made. A tea can be made from 1–2 teaspoons of dried bark (fresh can also be used) in 8 ounces of boiling water. Allow to steep for 15 minutes, then drink. However, no more than 4 cups of the tea should be consumed in any one day as it can have some side effects, such as sore stomach, nausea, and skin irritation (if the tea is applied to the skin as a poultice). Do not use if you have kidney damage.

A tincture is made by filling a jar halfway with bark from first year growth. Pack the bark in the jar, but not tightly as liquid will have to be able to penetrate. Cover the bark with vodka and cap the jar. Place in a warm area and shake once a day. After one month has passed, strain and store in colored glass bottles (to keep light out). Cap tightly and store in a cool, dry place.

Another way to use willow is as a poultice, which is made by smashing the bark and leaves together and placing it over the injury. Leave on for at least a half hour, longer if necessary. A strong tea can also be used as a poultice, soaking a clean cloth in the tea and leaving it on the injury until the poultice has cooled. To keep a poultice in place so that you can go about your regular activities, many people will either wrap a piece of clean cheesecloth or plastic wrap around the poultice (only use plastic wrap on the extremities).

It is worth keeping in mind that, as willow is basically the original aspirin, it can have many of the same or similar side effects, including blood thinning. Bottom line, if you are allergic to aspirin, do not use willow.

Witch Hazel (Hamamelis)

From the genus of flowering plants in the Hamamelidaceae family, there are four species of witch hazel in North America, one in China and one in Japan. It is a deciduous shrub and popular ornamental that can grow, on average, anywhere from 10–25 feet in height. It can be propagated from seed, cuttings or layering. The leaves are alternative, oval, long, and broad. The flowers consist of four slender, strap-like petals that range in color from pale to dark orange, yellow or red. Flowers will have fruit from the preceding year, as most species of witch hazel bloom between January and March. The fruit is a two-part capsule, a little over a quarter of an inch long with each part carrying a 1-inch black, glossy seed.

Medicinally, the leaves and bark of North American witch hazel have been used to produce an astringent decoction. It is also a cooling agent used in herbalism, traditional medicine and skin care products. The witch hazel found in the stores today is sold as witch hazel water, and is used on bruises, sores, eczema, psoriasis, cracked and blistered skin, burns, poison ivy and insect bites.

A poultice made from the inner bark of witch hazel is said to be quite effective for hemorrhoids and eye inflammation. It's also used for skin irritations, bruises, etc. An ointment can be made from one part witch hazel extract to nine parts lard. As an oral medication, witch hazel is potentially toxic due to the high content of tannins, especially in the commercial product. In the United States, it is used as an ingredient for topical applications only.

Yarrow *(Achillea millefolium)*

Yarrow is an herbaceous perennial, also known as soldier's woundwort, nosebleed plant, gordaldo, and plumajillo ("little feather") due to the leaves' likeness to feathers. There are several varieties and subspecies of yarrow, including common yarrow. It is native to the temperate regions of Europe, North America and Asia. It has limited culinary and medicinal use, but is also a dye plant.

The plant stems of yarrow will vary greatly in height depending on the variety and subspecies. The leaves near the bottom and mid-section of the stem are the largest. The flowers resemble miniature daisies and are made of disk florets (at the center) surrounded by five ray florets (the petals). Flowers bloom from May to July, with most of the active growth in the spring. They have a strong, sweet scent.

Yarrow has the ability to grow in less than ideal conditions. It can be propagated from seed but requires light to germinate, so plantings should be very shallow. It also needs 65–75°F soil. However, divisions may also be taken, and the plant is available at many nurseries. When planting yarrow, keep in mind that it can become invasive, so plant accordingly. Harvest fresh leaves for use. This is one of the few herbs where it is used exclusively fresh, and not dried.

Medicinally, yarrow is generally used to treat inflammation and stop bleeding. Simply crush the leaves and apply to a wound to slow or stop bleeding. Yarrow is not generally considered toxic, but some may find that they have severe allergies to it, which can include skin rashes in rare cases. Prolonged use of yarrow can also increase photosensitivity of the skin. The ASPCA also states that yarrow is toxic to dogs, cats and horses, and can make them quite ill.

Yarrow is also used for a natural dye, obtaining yellow when using fresh flowers and alum for a mordant, and olive green when using both fresh leaves and flowers with iron as a mordant. Yarrow essential oil also kills mosquito larvae, while the plant itself is considered good for companion planting as it repels pests while attracting beneficial insects.

If you are foraging for yarrow, use caution, as there are many similarities between the appearance of common yarrow and wild hemlock. Be certain of what you are taking.

CHAPTER 4

PRESERVING HERBS

When it comes to growing herbs, especially if you're planning to use your plants for culinary or medicinal purposes, it pays to know how best to preserve your harvest. There's nothing more heartbreaking than putting time, energy and resources into cultivating herbs, only to lose half your harvest because you couldn't find a use for everything before it went bad.

When we talk about preserving herbs, the first thing that probably pops into most people's minds are tied bunches of herbs hanging from a rack, slowly air drying. While air drying is still the most widely used method of preservation, there are a whole host of other ways to preserve herbs, including simply the flavor. So as long as you know the best methods ahead of time and can plan accordingly, you'll be able to enjoy the fruits of your labors for weeks and months after initial harvest!

Drying

There are a few ways to **dry herbs**. The easiest way is to take a bunch of herb with stems, tie the stems together and hang the herb in a cool, dry, dark, dust-free space. Alternatively, the herbs can be laid on a cooling rack, a screen, paper towel or cloth, though hanging and racks are still the best options. You want a dry environment so that the plant doesn't pick up any moisture, and darkness so that the light, especially natural light, doesn't fade its color.

Once the herb is thoroughly dried, the leaves can be stripped from the stem and placed whole or crushed in an airtight container. Try to store herbs as whole as possible, and grind them right before using. As soon as a dried herb is ground, the oils begin to slowly deteriorate, so the longer a ground or chopped herb sits, the more oil it loses.

Drying using a **low heat oven** is also an option. When using an oven, the temperature needs to be very low, under 175°F. Place the herbs on a cookie sheet in the oven and let dry for 2–4 hours. After 2 hours, check the herbs for dryness. When thoroughly dry, allow to cool.

Another option is using the **microwave**, although this method a bit tricky. First, you need to make sure that the herbs are not wet at all, or they will cook, not dry. Place up to five branches of herbs between two pieces of paper towel. Place in the microwave for 2–3 minutes and remove when thoroughly dry.

A final option, perhaps the best alternative to air drying, is using a **dehydrator**. Set somewhere between 95–115°F, though you may have to go higher if you are somewhere with high humidity. Normally, a dehydrator

will have a chart or guide that will tell you the correct temperature for whatever job you're doing, including herbs. If necessary, the herbs can be quickly rinsed, but they should be shaken or patted dry before going into the dehydrator. Place herbs in a single layer on the drying trays. It should take an average of 2–4 hours for them to dry, depending on the quantity being dried. When done, store as you would other dried herbs. Most dehydrators also have a fan to keep the air stirred and help keep things drying. If your machine does not have this feature, you will need to keep an eye on it and rotate the trays yourself.

Vinegar

Another way to preserve herbs is to preserve them through flavor, with **herbal vinegars** being an easy method of doing so. It is so simple that even a novice can prepare an herbal vinegar with confidence. Using a clean and sterilized jar (one that's been washed in the dishwasher will do), place the fresh herb inside. The more herb you put in, the stronger it will be. Fill the jar with vinegar (usually white), cover and let sit for at least 1–2 weeks or more, depending on how strong you want the vinegar. When the vinegar reaches the taste you're looking for, strain and return the vinegar to a new bottle.

Butter

Butter can be used to preserve the flavor of herbs. First, soften butter to room temperature and then mix in your fresh herbs of choice. Roll into a log or else pack into a container. Refrigerate for at least 24–48 hours before use to allow the flavors to meld into the butter. (You can wait longer for a more intense flavor.) You can use either salted or unsalted butter to make herbal butter. However, it must be actual butter; margarine will not work.

Infused Oil

Infused oils can be made for culinary, bath, or medicinal needs. There are two options available to make this herbal preserve: using a stovetop, or sunlight exposure.

To make infused oils on the stovetop, take two parts dried or wilted fresh herbs to four parts oil. Place the herbs in a double boiler (made by filling a pot with water and putting a heat resistant bowl over the pot). Place herbs in the top of the double boiler and pour the oil over them. Heat the double boiler over a low, slow heat, uncovered, for at least 3 hours, making sure that the oil doesn't bubble or smoke. When done, strain the oil through a strainer. When the oil is totally strained, squeeze the herbs to remove as much of the oil as possible. Bottle and store in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.

To make an infused oil using the sun, clean and sterilize a wide mouth glass jar (a canning jar will do). Loosely pack clean, dry/ wilted herbs up to the top of the jar. Cover with extra virgin olive oil or your oil of choice, depending on what you are making the infusion for. Poke a knife, chopstick or skewer along the edges to release any trapped air. Top off the jar with more oil, if necessary. Replace the lid and let sit in a warm, dry, sunny area for 2–6 weeks. Strain the oil and rebottle.

Wilting Herbs

You may have noticed that "**wilting**" the herbs are called for in the infused oil preparation. It is quite simple to wilt an herb. Lay the fresh herb on a screen, paper towel or cooling rack. Let the herbs sit for 24 hours in an area with good air circulation and no direct sunlight. Wilting dries the herb enough so that moisture doesn't interfere. This method may be used when making salves as well.

Freezing

Fresh herbs can also be preserved by **freezing them**. Strip the leaves from their stems and chop them. Pack ice cube trays with the herbs, cover them

with water and freeze. When frozen, pop the herb cubes out of the tray, place in a freezer bag and pull out for use as needed.

You can also freeze the chopped herb in oil or butter. Place the chopped herb in the ice cube tray and cover with olive oil or melted butter. Freeze, then drop the cubes in a freezer bag and put the bag in a freezer container (you don't want either the oil or butter to pick up flavors from the freezer). Pull out the cubes as needed.

Syrup

This can be used with desserts, drinks, and more, and it is so simple to make. To make a basic **herbal syrup**, you will need sugar (the finest you can get, so it will dissolve quickly) and water at a 1:1 ratio. Place the sugar in a heatproof container, then pour boiling water over it, whisking continually until the sugar dissolves. Careful: the sugar mixture will be *hot*. Add the herbs of your choice to the syrup, cover and allow to steep for at least 2 hours. When the flavor is to your liking, strain the herb from the syrup and pour into a sterilized container.

Ointments

Ointments preserve herbs for medicinal use. You can use this generic recipe to make a simple salve, adding whatever herbs you prefer.

You will need:

2–3 pints of wilted herbs (dried may be substituted)
1 pint of olive oil
Beeswax

Make an infused oil, as directed in the previous section on infused oils. You can use either the stovetop or sun method. After the oil has been made and

strained, place it in the top of a double boiler, with ¼ cup of grated beeswax per cup of infused oil. Heat until the beeswax is completely melted and thoroughly combined with the oil. This is what will solidify the ointment.

You can test the consistency of the ointment by taking a teaspoon full and placing it in the refrigerator for a few minutes. It should be hard enough to be solid but not too hard that you can't dip your fingers into it (or too runny to use, for that matter). If the ointment doesn't meet the consistency you're looking for, add just a little more beeswax (if too soft) or a little more oil (if too hard). Store the ointment in small containers. It will keep, refrigerated, for up to 2 years.

Although these aren't the only preservation methods for herbs, they are the most commonly used and easiest for beginners. All of them help to preserve your herbal harvest for the future, meaning out-of-season use for whichever herbs you please!


Lavender
Bay
Thyme
Oregano
Basil
Mint
Chamomile
Sage
Parsley
Rosemary

CHAPTER 5

FINDING USES FOR HOMEGROWN HERBS

A number of applications for herbs are discussed in the herbal catalog of this book, but it's worth going into a bit more detail on these methods, including which ones are right for your herbs and needs.

Essential Oils

Although **essential oils** have many uses, like applying lavender or peppermint on the temples for a headache, most essential oils should not be applied directly to the skin. Instead, they need to be mixed into a carrier oil, which will prevent the essential oil from irritating the skin. These are food grade oils and usually something like olive, almond or grape seed.

The formula for mixing together your own essential oils is to take no more than 20 drops of the essential oil of choice to ½ cup of the carrier oil. You should always try using the oil mix in a small area first, in case of an allergic reaction. (A reaction is rare, especially when mixed with the carrier oil, though if you do have a problem with allergies, it is better to be safe.)

Note that while you *can* make essential oils, it can be a long and tedious job, and it is just as easy to purchase them.

Poultice

A **poultice** is a mass of moistened materials, usually herbs or other plant-related material, that is applied to a sore or inflamed part of the body, and secured in place with cloth. To make a poultice using your fresh herb of choice, chop enough of the plant to cover the afflicted area. Place into a

small pan, cover with water and simmer for just a few minutes. Remove the wet herb and squeeze out any remaining liquid. Place the herb on to the afflicted area and wrap a cloth or bandage around to keep the poultice in place.

You can also make a plaster, which is a basically a poultice, but instead of direct skin application of the herb, it is placed between two pieces of cloth beforehand.

Infusion

An **infusion** is quite simple to make: it is just water and fresh/ dried herb. The usual formula is 1 ounce of dried herb or 2 ounces of fresh herb, placed in a heatproof container, to which 2 cups of boiling water is added. Measurements may be adjusted for desired strength or to make larger amounts. Cover and let steep for about 10 minutes, then strain into a clean jar. Cover and store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

Decoction

Similar to an infusion, a **decoction** means simmering the herb instead of steeping it. This method is used more with the harder substances (such as roots) that will not work as well when prepared as an infusion.

Place the herb of choice into a small pan and cover with water. Bring the mixture to a boil and allow it to simmer until the liquid has reduced by a third. Strain and pour into a container. Refrigerate the unused portion for up to 4 days.

Compresses

To make a **compress**, simply soak a cloth in either a decoction or infusion. Slightly wring out the cloth—just enough so it is not dripping—and place on the afflicted area. Compresses can be either warm or cold.

Aromatherapy

When you are using the scent of an herb to help improve your well-being, that is called **aromatherapy**. Aromatherapy can be done through the use of fresh herbs, essential oils and even candles. Aromatherapy is typically used to help relax and reduce stress.

Crafting

Herbs are a popular material in **crafting**. Herbs (usually dried) can be used to decorate wreaths, make potpourri, fill sachets, create dried arrangements, and any other creative thing you can come up with. Fresh herbs can be used as well, especially in fresh floral arrangements, and can be made into living herb wreaths.

Making Dye

Plants have been used as **fabric dyes** for thousands of years, and it isn't that complicated a process to follow. Take one peck of plant material per pound of fiber, be it yarn or fabric. (If using yarn, tie it so that it doesn't tangle during the various baths.) The final thing you'll need is your mordant of choice (normally iron, chrome, tin or alum) which determines how the herb takes to the fiber.

The night before, soak chopped herb in 2–3 gallons of water and leave until the next day. Wash the fiber by hand in a mild soapy water for several minutes. Rinse it in warm water, squeeze dry, and wrap in a towel to remove as much moisture as possible, before hanging it up to dry.

The following day prepare the mordant bath. Mordants can be found in most craft stores. Measure out the mordant and add enough water to the pot to cover the fiber, then add said fiber (which should be re-wet in cold water first) into the pot. If the fiber isn't quite covered, add more water. Bring to a boil and simmer for about 30 minutes, then turn off the heat and allow it cool. This will allow the mordant to adhere to the fiber.

In the meantime, boil the soaking herb for at least one hour. This will extract the dye from the plant. Strain and measure the liquid, then add the mordanted fiber to the dye bath. The fiber should be totally submerged. If not, add additional water until it is. Return to heat and slowly bring to a simmer for at least 30 minutes, stirring often and making sure the fiber remains under the water. If there is any evaporation, add more hot water until the fiber is covered.

After 30 minutes, remove from the heat. At this point, you can either remove the fiber from the dye or allow it to remain in the dye bath to cool. The longer the fiber remains in the dye, the darker the color. When the fiber is removed from the dye, rinse it multiple times in cold water, until the water runs clear.

FINAL WORDS

Growing and using your own herbs is a rewarding, fun, and functional way to garden. Herbs can be made grow indoors and outdoors, can supply you with food, flavorings, and medicine, and bring an extra something special to any home garden.

Growing and using herbs is something that has been done for thousands of years, with some families passing down their knowledge through the generations. For those not so lucky to have an inherited knowledge base, there are any number of classes available all over the country and online that will teach you not only how to grow herbs, but how to use herbs as well. Avail yourself of these resources, especially with regard to medicinal herbs and foraging.

As we've stressed numerous times throughout this book, it is very important to be educated about what you choose to put into your garden, your kitchen, and your body. Don't be tempted to play doctor; not all herbs are good for you, and not all herbs can be used the same way. Natural doesn't automatically mean safe, and even the herbs that are considered safe can become dangerous if misused or combined with other medications. Always consult with a medical professional before beginning herbs for medicinal use, *especially* if you are already on prescription drugs.

By the same token, never collect herbs from the wild unless you know what you are collecting and for what purpose. When using herbs from the garden, make sure that you are using only the parts of the plant that are safe. Learn the smell, feel, and taste; when in doubt, err on the side of caution.

Now that you have an idea of herbs and their uses, where you go from here is up to you. Decide where you want to start and how you want to start. Whether you are looking to create a traditional herb garden, add a few containers to your windowsill, or want to get really creative with a theme or knot garden, herb gardening can be a rewarding experience for the entire family. The knowledge you gain by establishing this deeper connection with

the possibilities that herbs provide will be useful in multiple situations, from food to health—a skill that will stay with you forever.

Enjoy!

RECEIPES

Ginger Pancakes

1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons sugar
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon ground ginger
¾ cup buttermilk room temperature
¼ cup milk room temperature
1 large egg
2 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Vegetable oil, for brushing griddle
½ cup finely chopped crystallized ginger (optional)

Heat a large non-stick skillet or griddle over low heat (you can also use cast iron).

In a medium bowl, mix flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Whisk ground ginger into dry ingredients, then whisk in egg, butter, and vanilla. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and whisk until just mixed. Return batter to measuring cup, stirring in just enough water, if necessary, to make a thick, pourable batter.

Increase heat to medium. Brush skillet or griddle with oil. When oil starts to sputter, but before it starts to smoke, pour in the batter, about ¼ cup at a time. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon crystallized ginger over the uncooked side of each pancake as it cooks.

Once the pancake bottoms are golden brown and the tops are starting to bubble (about 2–3 minutes), flip the pancakes. Cook until pancakes are golden brown on the remaining side. Repeat, brushing skillet or griddle with oil. Serve hot.

Cucumber Dill Salad

½ cup sour cream
2 tablespoons cider vinegar (can substitute white vinegar)
1 teaspoon sugar
¾ teaspoon garlic powder
¾ teaspoon dill weed
½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
3 medium cucumbers, sliced
½ cup sliced onion

Combine sour cream, vinegar, sugar, garlic powder, dill weed and salt. Add cucumbers and onion, toss to coat. Refrigerate covered, for at least 1 hour before serving to allow flavors to meld.

Coriander Chutney

1 bunch coriander, finely chopped
2 green chilies (or more to taste), finely chopped
1 teaspoon cumin seeds or ground cumin
1 small onion, finely chopped
Pinch of salt
Juice ½ lemon or lime (fresh)

Wash the coriander. Combine the finely chopped onion, chilies, and coriander. Add salt, juice, and cumin. Blend to a fine paste using food processor or blender

For a spicier chutney, substitute the green chilies for a spicier pepper, such as habanero, or put in half green chili and half habanero.

Rosemary Bread

1 tablespoon active dry yeast
1 cup lukewarm water
1 tablespoon sugar
2½ cups unbleached bread flour (all-purpose flour may be substituted)
1 teaspoon salt (may use an artisan salt)

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh, chopped rosemary
2 tablespoons salted butter

Place yeast, sugar and water in large bowl. Allow to sit until it bubbles (this is the yeast activating). Mix 2 cups of flour into the yeast mixture, followed by the salt and 1 tablespoon rosemary. Place dough onto a floured breadboard and knead for 10 minutes. Add the rest of the flour as necessary until dough ball is smooth and elastic.

Coat a bowl with olive oil and place dough in the bowl, covering with a clean towel. Allow the dough to rise in a warm place for 1 hour or until it has doubled in size. Punch down dough and divide in half. Let dough rest another 5–10 minutes.

Spray baking pan or cookie sheet with cooking spray. Shape the dough into two small oval loaves. Melt butter and brush over the tops of the loaves. Sprinkle the remaining rosemary over the loaves and gently press into the surface. Sprinkle lightly with salt and place in a preheated 400°F oven for approximately 13–15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. This bread is also great made into rolls!

Garlic Tarragon Dressing

¼ cup vinegar (may use cider vinegar)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons garlic salt
2 teaspoons sugar
½ teaspoon dried tarragon

In a small jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine vinegar, oil, garlic salt, sugar and tarragon. Shake well. Use as a salad dressing or marinade.

Mint Lemonade

5 cups water (may also use carbonated water)
Juice of 4–5 large lemons (or to taste)
¾ cup sugar (or to taste)
Fresh mint leaves to taste (use mint of choice)

Combine all ingredients except mint into a pitcher or bottle. Shake or stir until all the sugar is dissolved. Add mint leaves (some may be bruised to release more flavor) and shake or stir again. Add more lemon or mint if needed. Serve over ice.

Tomato Basil Soup

1 cup tomato paste
½ cup chicken broth (may use low sodium, adding extra salt if necessary)
¾ cup heavy cream
18 ounces tomato juice (fresh if possible)
2 large bunches fresh basil
½ teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon kosher salt, divided
1 tablespoon ground black pepper, freshly ground
2 Roma tomatoes, diced

Combine paste, juice, cream, broth, 2 teaspoons salt, 2 teaspoons pepper, and diced tomatoes in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce heat to medium low and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid has reduced by a third. Using an immersion blender, puree soup until smooth. Add basil leaves to tomato puree and let steep for 5 minutes over low heat. Remove leaves.

RESOURCES

Books

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Yeager, Selene. *The Doctors Book of Food Remedies: The Latest Findings on the Power of Food to Treat and Prevent Health Problems-from Aging and Diabetes to Ulcers and Yeast Infections*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2012.

Websites

National Center for Home Food Preservation
http://nchfp.uga.edu
Very informative site on home food processing.

The New Century Homesteader
www.thenewcenturyhomesteader.blogger.com
Workshops and programs. Feel free to contact with questions on any aspect of backyard farming.

Countryside Magazine
www.coutrysidemag.com
One of the earliest (and best) magazines on self-sufficiency.

Mother Earth News
www.motherearthnews.com
One of the first magazines for those interested in homesteading and self-sufficiency. A variety of articles about food preservation.

Acres USA: The Voice of EcoAgriculture
www.acresusa.com
Excellent magazine for sustainable and organic farming. Lots of articles for the small and backyard farmer.

Organic Gardening Magazine
www.organicgardening.com
Magazine for the organic gardener and small farmer. Covers rural, suburban, and urban all across the country. Includes occasional articles

about preserving food.

Burpee
www.burpee.com
A great resource for both old favorites and brand-new experimental hybrids, the curiously named Burpee provides a great resource for a third- or fourth-year gardener who is looking to increase the breadth of his garden's variety or who is starting to think about trying to make their own hybrids.

Baker Creek
www.rareseeds.com
A must for anyone interested in growing heirlooms in their gardens. Chock-full of familiar and unusual vegetables (and fruits) to grow, as well as excellent photographs of the vegetables (or fruits), this is one of the best resources out there.

Seeds of Change
www.seedsofchange.com
This is a purveyor of certified organic seeds. Although they may now be found in various brick-and-mortar market venues, in order to really see the depth of their offerings, those serious in organics need to take a look at the entire catalog.

Seed Savers Exchange
www.seedsavers.org
Dedicated to saving and sharing heirloom seeds, this is another excellent resource for the usual and the unusual for the food garden. Customers may also become members of this organization and become stewards in the movement to save and spread heirlooms.

Garden.org
An excellent resource for any gardener, the website of the National Gardening Association provides up-to-date information on gardening, including tips and tricks for beginners, as well as a variety of other resources, including an easy-to-navigate "Gardening Dictionary" to aid in your planning and planting.

Also in the *Backyard Farming* Series…

Backyard Farming: Canning & Preserving

Backyard Farming: Composting

Backyard Farming: Fruit Trees, Berries & Nuts

Backyard Farming: Growing Garlic

Backyard Farming: Growing Vegetables & Herbs

Backyard Farming: Home Harvesting

Backyard Farming: Homesteading

Backyard Farming: Keeping Honey Bees

Backyard Farming: Raising Cattle for Dairy and Beef

Backyard Farming: Raising Chickens

Backyard Farming: Raising Goats

Backyard Farming: Raising Pigs

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