

A few tips on some herbs

Growing Basil

Basil can be easily grown from seed. Sow the seed in a warm time of year, about an inch, or just over two centimeters apart. When the seedlings have developed 2 or 3 leaves they may be replanted 6 to 12 inches apart. Make sure you wait until it's warm enough, though; they tell me that the leaves will yellow if the night temperature gets too cold.

I add a good layer of mulch, about 3 inches. Water about once a week, if necessary. Fertilize sparingly as too much fertilizing diminishes the unique fragrance of the plant.

Prune regularly, at least every 2 to 3 weeks, and you will increase the bushiness of the plant. Clip leaves back to about 1/4 inch above a node and leave just enough foliage on the plant so that it can continue growing healthily.

Nip off any flower heads that appear and you will get a continuous supply of basil throughout the growing season

Not a bad idea to plant your basil near your tomatoes. They are great mates!

Growing Chives

Chives are best grown by simply splitting and separating the bulbs of existing plants and replanting.



They grow wild in most parts of the world. Given full sun and planted in rich, well drained soil they will produce healthy plants which will adorn any herb garden with their purple heads.

They are hardy plants, however, which will still produce good plants in poorer soils and partial sun. Plant the thinnings about 9 inches (23 cm) apart. The flowers may be removed for improved flavor.

Chives will grow readily indoors and should be potted in autumn to provide a winter supply. They may be harvested by snipping off the leaves, leaving about 2 inches (5 cm) for regrowth.

Growing Coriander

The young plants should be planted about 4" apart where you want them to grow as they do not respond well to transplanting. They should be in full sun in good draining soil.

Add compost and mulch to ensure that the young plants don't dry out, and plant an area every 3 or 4 weeks for a constant supply throughout the growing season. (Of course that depends upon how much you use coriander leaves)



The leaves may be harvested when they are about 6 inches high.

The seeds should be harvested when brown, prior to dropping. The plants should be cut off at the base and hung upside down in paper bags for further drying.

Note that coriander should not be planted in such close proximity to the fennel as it inhibits seed set in fennel.

Growing Dill



Dill needs a rich well drained soil and should be planted in site as it does not transplant well.

Sow in spring to midsummer in batches to ensure a constant supply throughout the summer.

It is a good idea to plant dill near roses as it attracts insects whose larvae feed on aphids. Also, dill planted near marigolds provides a magic splash of color. **Do not plant near fennel, however, as dill and fennel cross-pollinate.**

To harvest, simply pick off the leaves as required and leave the rest of the plant to continue growing.

Growing Fennel

Common fennel is a member of the parsley family and has leaves similar in appearance to dill. It is grown from seed in well-drained soil and full sun. It should be sown from early spring to late summer.

Fennel does well in low rainfall conditions once it is established. Harvesting can commence when the plant is 6 inches (15 cms) high. The top 2 inches (5 cms) may be picked.

The leaves will stay fresh for a week with the stems in water.

Harvest the seeds in late summer as soon as they ripen. Remove the heads as soon as they begin turning brown. Dry the seeds in a paper bag until they dry, then store in a dry, dark location for about 6 months.

Growing Mint

Mint may be grown in partial shade to full sun. It is a hardy perennial, best grown in pots as its roots can be invasive and it can easily take over the garden if you are not careful.

Root or stem cuttings may be taken, or the plant may be divided in spring or autumn. Sow in spring. Summer stem cuttings may be rooted in water. Pick leaves just before flowering.

Mint grows to a tall plant and produces a wonderful intense fragrance and purple flowers.



Florence Fennel



Mint is useful in deterring aphids if grown near roses.

Growing Rosemary

Rosemary is a fiddle to grow from seed. It is a tender perennial and it is best to get good quality nursery seedlings and plant in site where they will get full sun with possibly some afternoon shade.

You will need to leave a good 2 feet (60cms) around the seedlings for them to thrive. Rosemary will grow in fairly average soil with a ph of 6.5 to 7, but does need good drainage.



Growing rosemary near cabbages and beans will repel moths and beetles.

Growing Marjoram



Marjoram enjoys warm climates and rich soils. The warmer the climate the less rich the soil needs to be.

Again I suggest you get started plants from the nursery and sow after you are sure any chance of another frost has passed. Sow seedlings about 6" apart (or I like to plant clumps of 2 or 3 seedlings together about a foot apart).

Keep the soil slightly, but not overly, moist while the plants are settling in. Harvest by picking leaves when they are big enough and before any flowers appear.

Growing Oregano

The oregano plant can grow horizontally up to 2 ½ feet tall with pungent leaves. The flowers grow in clusters at the end of shoots and bloom in June. Wild oregano flowers are purple in color while Greek oregano has white flowers.



The Mexican oregano is more pungent than the Mediterranean variety and is a shrub like plant that can grow to a height of 7 feet. This herb has a pungent smell and taste. It is a perennial plant in warm climates and in colder climes it is an annual. The leaves contain an essential oil called origanum oil which gives it its distinctive taste and smell.

Growing Parsley

If you really want to start from seeds, and most people I talk to do, give them a day's soaking in water to soften them before planting. They should germinate in about 3 to 4 weeks. Also, with parsley, I plant every year. They say it's biennial but, to me, parsley never seems to taste the same the second year, and, after all, it's pretty easy to grow.

Plant the seedlings in early spring, after the frosts, about 9" apart in slightly alkaline, good draining soil. Pick a spot that has some shade.

Harvesting is a snip. Just snip off what you need for a meal and the rest of plant will continue to grow. About 6 plants (planted at one time in spring) do me for the season.

Growing Sage



Sage is a semi hardy perennial which can live up to five years. Plant the seedlings out in spring in site in well drained average soil which will receive full sun during the day.

If you pinch the small plants as they grow they will branch outwards rather than upwards.

It may be worthwhile using a 2' stake if your plant is likely to be subjected to blustery conditions. The plant will grow to about 2' and is reasonably sturdy

Growing Thyme

If you are starting from scratch it's best to start from cuttings rather than seeds. Better still if you know someone who has thyme growing you can use a cutting of theirs.

Thyme is one of the easiest herbs to grow. It needs sun, at least 4 hours per day but will take as much as you can give it. It likes loose, fast draining, soil and not very fertile. Remember, many herbs lose some of their wonderful scent and flavor if given too much fertilizer.

Thyme is very hardy, surviving in temperatures way below zero. To harvest, simply snip some leaves off for fresh use. Once the plant is in full bloom, cut the stems about halfway or where they are no longer tender.