

How to Care for Herbs

For a herb garden, it's easiest to keep similar herbs together, ones that prefer similar sun and soil conditions.

BASIL

Basil can be finicky and needs full sun and heat, yet in the hotter climates Basil will also appreciate some mid-day shade. Don't interplant Basil with other herbs, its water needs are too demanding. Keep soil spongy to keep the roots cool & moist. Strive for a rich well drained soil of a 50/50 mix of potting soil and organic compost. To prevent powdery mildew on the leaves, don't water at night and keep humidity levels to a minimum. Treat as an annual and replace each year. Good companions: Other Basil.

CHIVES

Chives enjoy full sun yet can handle partial shade. Soil should be well drained and, while it likes rich soil, it will also handle a lighter mix. Water regularly yet the herb is very flexible and adapts to many different watering schedules. Chives repel certain pests but attract bees. This is a perennial herb and will return each year. Good companions: Carrots, parsley, tomatoes.

CILANTRO

Cilantro is an herb that grows quickly in cool seasons, and its leaves should be harvested before it flowers for the best flavor. The seeds that follow the flowers are coriander, which can also be harvested, simply dry and grind the coriander seeds. Water regularly and deeply especially as summer heat approaches to prevent bolting, which is a premature growth of flowers and seeds. Plant in full sun to partial shade in average garden soil. Snip often to keep plant tidy and compact. Good companions: Basil, mint, parsley.

DILL

Dill can be kept happy by planting in a hot, sunny spot with well-drained moist soil. Water and deadhead regularly to slow bolting. Does not grow well indoors; it needs full sun, well drained soil, and hot weather. Snip frequently. Useful pest repellent in a vegetable garden, deterring aphids and spider mites. Good companions: Kale, cucumbers.

MARJORAM

Plant Marjoram in full sun and light, sandy or silty, well drained soil; they are also well suited for growing in containers. Established plants require little care, other than occasional watering. For best flavor, pick the shoots just before the flowers begin to open. Treat as an annual and replace each year. Good companions: Many vegetables, celery, onions.

MINT

Mint thrives in sun or shade, grows with little water, needs no attention, and will come back each year. Its strong root system can be invasive so corral it in a container if there's no room in the landscape for its roaming qualities. Good companions: Many vegetables, tomatoes.

OREGANO

Pick a brightly lit, dry spot to plant Oregano. Water regularly yet sparingly. Good companions: Parsley, peppers.

PARSLEY

Parsley requires full sun, yet in the hotter climates Parsley will also appreciate some mid-day shade. Strive for a nutrient rich yet well drained soil that stays moist yet not overly wet. Native soil can be enriched by mixing in several inches of aged compost or other rich organic matter. Parsley is ready to be harvested when stems have three segments. For fresh parsley through winter, repot an outdoor plant and place by a sunny window. Good companions: Asparagus, tomatoes.

ROSEMARY

Rosemary is perfect for a hot, dry garden. This drought tolerant plant is also ideal for growing in a pot in a sunny spot. This woody herb is a perennial and can be permanently planted outdoors in Zones 8-10. Good companions: Lemon balm, mint, parsley.

SAGE

Plant Sage in a sunny spot indoors or out. Sage thrives in fairly dry soil so don't overwater once established. Spread compost around the plant once or twice each season. Good companions: Other herbs, cabbage.

THYME

BEWARE: The popular Woolly Thyme is NOT a culinary herb.

Thyme enjoys a well draining, dry soil so only water when soil is dry, it does not tolerate wet feet. Prune aggressively through season to keep plant tidy. Plant in a sunny site that offers some afternoon shade. Good companions: Other herbs.