Growing your own herbs is fun and easy. Herbs can be used fresh or dried to add flavor to your favorite dishes.

**How Do I Get Started?**

Before you plant your garden, decide which herbs you will need. Look at some of your recipes. Which herbs do you use the most? If you make spaghetti, you should plant oregano. For Mexican and Asian dishes, you will need cilantro. For Indian food, coriander is important.

Once you’ve chosen your herbs, create a space for them in your garden. Herbs need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight every day. Herbs will not grow well inside your house.

**Can I Grow Herbs in Containers?**

Yes, herbs can do well in containers. However, the bottom of the container must have holes. If you buy a container from a store, ask an employee to drill the holes for you. Otherwise, make three to four 1/4” holes in the bottom of the container.

Some herbs, such as mint and lemon verbena, should always be grown in containers. This is because they have underground stems that grow quickly. They can easily take over a garden patch and are difficult to eradicate.

Herbs planted in containers in direct sun can dry out quickly. This is why it is important to keep them well-watered. When you water, you should notice water coming out of the bottom of the container. Test the container soil with your finger every day in hot weather to check if it is dry. Water only when soil feels dry. Plants need both water and air in the soil so their roots can grow. This is why you do not want to keep soil in the container wet all the time.

**The Herb Life Cycle**

Some plants live for only 6 months to one year. These plants are called annuals, and include some herbs. You will need to replant them in your garden every year. Sometimes they will grow back on their own from seed, but not always. The Mini Herb guide in this publication will tell you more about each plant.

Perennials are plants that live for several years. There are many perennial herbs. These plants should be replaced after 4-5 years when they begin to look bad. During the winter, perennials “die back” and look dead, but they are actually resting. The plant will begin to grow again in spring. Wait until then to prune. If the plant does not grow back, you will need to replace it.

**When Should I Start?**

Plant both annual and perennial herbs from seed in spring. Or get them at a local nursery or garden center in spring, fall or summer and plant them.

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**Did You Know?**

EBT card holders may use their Food Stamp benefits to purchase seeds and plants to grow food for their personal consumption.
**Mini Herb Guide: Plant, Harvest and Cook Great Tasting Food**

**Growing & Cooking Tips**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Growing &amp; Cooking Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basil</strong></td>
<td>Can be dried or frozen. Great for making pesto. Also an important ingredient in pho. Annual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chamomile</strong></td>
<td>Not all chamomile is the same. Check that the label is Matricaria recutita. Dry and use in a tea ball to make tea. Annual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chives</strong></td>
<td>Can take partial shade. Use fresh stems in soups, salads or omelets for onion-like flavor. Perennial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cilantro &amp; Coriander</strong></td>
<td>Can take partial shade. Harvest young leaves and use fresh in salads, salsa, pho and other dishes. Annual. Coriander is the seed from the cilantro plant! After flowers bloom, seed heads form. Allow seed heads to ripen, then harvest and place in a paper bag. Seeds are ready after pods open within about 10 days. Annual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dill</strong></td>
<td>Seeds from this plant may sprout all over your garden. Pull out baby plants as they appear. Use this herb to make pickles or flavor pasta salad. Annual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lemon Balm</strong></td>
<td>This plant can be invasive, keep it in a pot. Needs to be planted in partial shade. Use fresh baby leaves in iced tea or salad. Perennial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mint</strong></td>
<td>This plant can be invasive, keep it contained in a pot. Mint sprigs are great in soups, salads and tea. Perennial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oregano</strong></td>
<td>Do not overwater. Use in spaghetti and pizza sauces. Perennial.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chamomile or Mint Tea**

**Using Dried Herbs**

Multiply the number of cups your pot will hold by 1. If your pot holds 4 cups, you would use 4 tablespoons of dried herb.

**Hot Tea**

Pour boiling water into a teapot and leave for 5 minutes. Keep teapot covered to retain heat.

**Ice Tea**

Use 3 tablespoons of fresh herbs or 2 tablespoons of dried herbs per cup.

**A Note of Caution**

If you are pregnant or nursing, do not drink herbs as a tea without first consulting your doctor.

**Drying Herbs**

- **Olive oil spray**
- **1 cup finely chopped onions**
- **1 1/4 c cheddar cheese grated**
- **3 eggs**
- **1 1/2 c fat free milk**
- **1 1/2 tsp tarragon**
- **1/2 tsp thyme**

**Directions**


**Recipe developed by UCCE Stanislaus County**