
Growing Herbs for Cooking

Herbs are considered some of the easiest plants to grow. When you grow your own herbs, it is so simple and cost-effective to snip off just the amount that you need for cooking every day. Use these tips to get you started:

Indoors

Pick a sunny east- or south-facing window if possible. If not, consider installing a skylight or purchasing a grow light to place over your herbs. Easy herbs to grow indoors are basil, parsley, and rosemary.

Small Outdoor Space

Plant herbs along walkways or at the edge of your garden for easy harvesting.

Patio or Balcony

Find ways to use vertical space. Hanging baskets and multilevel plant stands are excellent ways to add more herbs per square foot. If you have a rail, use the long window boxes and attach them to your balcony.

Easiest Herbs to Grow and How to Use Them:

(Note: Always wash fresh herbs before using)

- **Rosemary**
Add flavor to poultry, beef, fish, potato dishes, or pizza dough
- **Thyme**
Use to add flavor to beef, pork, lamb, vegetable dishes, fish, soups, sauces, or egg dishes
- **Sage**
Add flavor to poultry, poultry stuffing, beef, pork, sauces, bean dishes, or sausage
- **Parsley**
Chop and sprinkle onto any dish
- **Chives**
Add to egg or potato dishes
- **Mint**
Add to tea, desserts, grain dishes, salads, pork, lamb, peas, or sauces
- **Oregano**
Add to pizza, sauces, pork, vegetable dishes, fish, or chili
- **Tarragon**
Use to flavor poultry, seafood, egg dishes, or sauces
- **Cilantro**
Use in fresh salsa or guacamole
- **Basil**
Use in salads, pesto, sauces, egg dishes or pasta dishes

Tips for Growing Herbs in Containers:

It is great if you have outdoor space to plant herbs. But many herbs grow better in containers (especially mint, basil, thyme, parsley, and rosemary).

- **Select hardy varieties.** Choose the herbs that you cook with the most frequently and try to find heirloom varieties whenever possible. If you're not sure how to get started, the staff at the nursery or gardening department should be able to answer your questions.
- **Choose a sunny location.** Position your pots directly beneath your window to maximize sunlight effectiveness. Don't forget that pots can be moved around, when seasons and light conditions shift. Remember to rotate your pots occasionally, so that your herbs grow evenly.
- **Use a container with good drainage.** Choose pots with drains and saucers. If you only have a sealed pot, place rocks in the bottom of the pot and add some vermiculite to the soil, or use potting soil, to help with drainage.
- **Water and fertilize carefully.** Most plants die from too much attention, rather than not enough. Fertilizer should be added every three to six weeks, depending on whether the plant is indoor or outdoor. Use a calendar to keep track. To check for water, put your finger in the soil about two inches deep. If it is dry, the plant needs water. Otherwise, don't water it.
- **Harvest properly.** Wait until the plant is mature to harvest for the first time. Never harvest more than one third of the plant at one time. Wait for that one third to grow back before you harvest again. Remove all flowers that appear to ensure the most vibrant flavor. Herbs will grow quicker and fuller if you prune them correctly.

