
How to Grow Herbs for Cooking

Herbs are some of the easiest plants to grow. Growing your own herbs is simple and cost-effective. Just snip off the amount that you need for cooking. Use these tips to get started. Always wash fresh herbs before use.

Where to Grow Herbs

Indoors

Place in a sunny east- or south-facing window or under a skylight. Or, consider a grow light to place over your herbs. Basil, parsley, and rosemary are easy to grow indoors.

Patio or Balcony

Find ways to use vertical space. Hanging baskets and multi-level plant stands can help add more herbs per square foot. If you have a rail, attach long window boxes to your balcony.

Small Outdoor Space

For easy use, plant herbs along walkways or at the edge of your garden.



Easiest Herbs to Grow and How to Use Them

- **Rosemary**

Add flavor to poultry, beef, fish, potato dishes, pasta dishes, or pizza dough

- **Thyme**

Add flavor to beef, pork, lamb, vegetable dishes, lentils, fish, soups, sauces, or egg dishes

- **Oregano**

Add to pizza, sauces, pork, vegetable dishes, fish, or chili

- **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

- **Sage**

Add flavor to poultry, poultry stuffing, beef, pork, sauces, bean dishes, or sausage

- **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. However, many herbs grow better in containers (especially mint, basil, thyme, parsley, and rosemary).

- **Select Hardy Varieties**

Choose 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 increase 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.

- **Use the Proper Soil**

Be sure to purchase potting or container soil rather than bringing in dirt from outside. Potting soil is disease- and weed-free, drains quickly, and will help promote rapid and healthy root growth.

- **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.

