

A BASIC GUIDE FOR AROMATIC HERB PRODUCTION

There are several ways of classifying herbs, but the growth season forms the basis for this publication. The field relating to herbs is broad and for more complete information refer to books such as those listed on the last page. These books also describe the less common herbs which will not be discussed here.

Drying of herbs is a way of preserving them for use when they are not available fresh. Little external heat with plenty of air circulation is the best way to preserve the color and flavor. Outdoors, it is best to place material on screens, preferably in the shade. Indoors, the screens may be placed with a fan circulating air for faster drying. Sunlight may cause excessive flavor and color losses. A home food dehydrator that is thermostatically controlled to no more than 100-105° F may be used.

Storage containers that are light-tight and moisture proof will help preserve the flavors for which herbs are grown.

ANNUALS	
Name	Description - Cultivation - Harvest and Uses
Anise <i>Pimpinella anisum</i>	Carrot family. Good garden soil and normal care for annual plants will produce good growth of this herb. A row 6-8 feet long will produce enough seeds for family use. The fruiting umbel should be harvested when the seeds turn brown, or late fall. As they are clipped from the plant, they should be thoroughly dried and the seeds separated, cleaned and stored. Fresh leaves possess a flavor similar to that of the seeds and may be used as needed during the season. These fresh leaves are good to flavor salads, especially apple. The seeds are used in cookies and candies
BASIL-SWEET <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Mint Family. An aromatic plant grown widely because of its pleasant, spicy odor and taste. The leaves may be used fresh or dry. The seeds should be planted at normal seeding time for annuals in rows approximately 3-feet apart and about 1-inch apart in the row. When the plants begin to flower, the tops may be removed to within 6 to 8 inches from the ground and the leaves used for fresh flavoring or for drying. Several cuttings may be made during the season. Tie foliage in small bundles and hang in a well-ventilated, dark room or spread thinly on a screen to dry. When thoroughly dried, store in closed containers with a tight lid, in the dark. Fresh or dry, the leaves may be used to improve the flavor of tomato dishes, cucumbers, green salads, eggs and shrimp. Dried basil is quite inferior in flavor.
CHERVIL <i>Anthriscus cerefolium</i>	Carrot family. The seeds should be planted in 2-foot rows and thick enough to insure a final stand of 3 or 4 to the foot. The foliage may be harvested two or three times during the summer and dried for winter use. Dry and store as for basil. The fresh dry leaves give a delightful flavor to salads and salad dressings, omelets, soups and stews.
CORIANDER <i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Carrot family. Plant in early spring to mature the seeds that are used in flavoring and scenting. Rows should be 3-feet apart and the plants can be 1-inch apart in the row. The plants should be cut for seed when the fruits have turned brown and before they fall to the ground. The pleasing flavor is not thoroughly developed until the seed is completely dry. The whole plant should be tied in bundles, or spread on a screen to dry. The clean seed should be stored in closed containers. The seeds are used in cookies and French dressings, and in combination with other spices and herbs.

<p>CUMIN <i>Cuminum cyminum</i></p>	<p>Carrot family. Its aromatic seeds are used for flavoring various foods. A fairly long season will be required for growth of this plant. Plant in rows 2-feet apart with about 16-20 seeds per foot. Late in fall, when the umbels begin to turn brown, the plant should be cut and spread on a screen to dry. When dry, the seeds are separated and stored in paper bags or cartons. The mature seeds are used in certain kinds of breads and with coriander seeds in sausage and cottage cheese. The ground seeds form an important ingredient in chili and curry powders.</p>
<p>DILL <i>Anethum graveolens</i></p>	<p>Carrot family. The entire plant is aromatic and the young leaves as well as the fully developed green fruit may be used for flavoring purposes. Dill grows quite tall, so plant in rows about 3-feet apart and thin to 3 or 4 plants per foot. The umbels are dried on screens in the shade and when threshed, stored in closed containers for winter use. The flavor from the leaves is lost when dried. The leaves may be used in the fresh state for flavoring butter, for fried meats and fish or in sandwich filling. The seeds may be used either fresh or dried. Of course, the main use for the seeds is for flavoring pickles.</p>
<p>SUMMER SAVORY <i>Satureja hortensis</i></p>	<p>Mint family. Easily grown from seeds sown in early spring in rows 3-feet apart, spaced 3 to 4 inches apart in the row. The tender leaves and stems may be used at any time during the season, but for drying the upper 6 to 8 inches are removed when blooming begins. More than one cutting may be made in a season. This top growth is tied in small bunches or spread on a screen to dry. When thoroughly dry, the leaves are stripped from the stems and stored in closed containers. The leaves, fresh or dry, may be added to water for cooking string beans, or used in soups, stuffing, and sauces for veal and poultry, and also egg dishes or salads.</p>
<p>BIENNIALS: In our climate, biennials are sowed about August 15 – September 15.</p>	
<p>CARAWAY <i>Carum carvi</i></p>	<p>Carrot family. Caraway can be planted in rows about 2-feet apart with a stand of 6 to 8 plants per foot. Germination is slow and winter weeds must be kept down to reduce competition. The flowering will take place in early summer and the seeds will be mature in mid to late summer. When the seed umbels have turned brown, they should be cut from the plant before they fall to the ground. After drying thoroughly, the seeds are separated and stored in a paper bag or closed container. When boiling cabbage or potatoes in their jackets, add a few seeds to improve the flavor. They may be used for potato salad, cream or cottage cheese, cookies or bread. For use with roast pork, crush the seeds and mix with lemon juice, oil and onions.</p>
<p>CELERY <i>Apium graveolens</i></p>	<p>Carrot family. It is grown for its fleshy leaf stock as a vegetable, but another variety has been developed for seed production. Celery is very slow to germinate. Plants may be grown indoors or in a prepared seed bed and when large enough, transplanted to rows 3-feet apart with 4 to 6 inches between the plants. Direct seeding into the garden in late June will produce plants which, if they are mulched with straw for some protection, will probably overwinter. During the first season the tender leaves and leaf stalks may be used fresh for flavoring purposes or dried for later use. The second summer the seed umbels form on a tall stalk and are harvested when mature. They are dried and the seeds separated and stored in closed containers. They are used in pickling fish and in salads, salad dressings and other dishes where celery flavor is desired.</p>
<p>PARSLEY <i>Petroselinum crispum</i></p>	<p>Carrot family. Parsley should be planted in early spring, either from transplants or by seed. The plants may be grown in rows as close as 1-foot apart, if the plants are thinned to 6 to 8 inches apart in the row. The green leaves can be harvested at any time during the season as soon as sufficient growth has been made. In our area, with only a slight amount of protections, parsley may stay green all winter. Some parsley may tend to be perennial, but many plants will flower and make seed after winter. Parsley leaves can be used fresh, or if the crop is large enough, dried. It is used to flavor and garnish soups, vegetables, salads, meats and poultry.</p>
<p>PERENNIALS: Includes a large number of herbs and although they may be started from seeds, many of them are obtained as plants from the nursery.</p>	
<p>CHIVE <i>Allium schoenoprasum</i></p>	<p>Onion family. The small bulbous plants grow in clumps which need to be divided periodically. In our location, tender leaves are available almost year round. Chopped leaves are used with many foods where a delicate onion flavor is needed. Cut to the ground to harvest.</p>
<p>Costmary <i>Chrysanthemum majus</i></p>	<p>Aster family. Once established, the leaves can be pulled at any time during the season and used fresh or dried. The dried leaves are stripped from the leaf stocks and should be stored in a closed container. They are used with meat, poultry and tea.</p>

FENNEL both common <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> and sweet fennel <i>F. vulgare dulce</i> (Italian)	Carrot family. Mature seeds of both are used. The plants will probably not flower the first season, but each year after that will produce flowers and seed. Young, tender shoots and leaves of the sweet fennel are suited for flavoring foods. The fresh leaves give flavor to fish, fish sauces and salads. The seeds are commonly used in breads, pastries, candies and drinks. The Italian fennel is grown for the bulbous base which can be eaten raw or cooked.
GARLIC <i>Allium sativum</i>	Onion family. The crop is normally planted as an annual with the “seed” obtained by separating the bulbs. They should be planted about mid-to-late August, in rows 12-inches apart and 4 to 6 inches between the plants. The crop is harvested by pulling when the tops turn yellow, which is about July. The bulbs are thoroughly dried and stored like onions in well aerated bags or by braiding with string. Garlic is widely used in flavoring meat, soups, salads and various kinds of pickles.
LEMON BALM <i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Mint family. The leaves may be used fresh or spread on screens to dry quickly. The clean leaves should be stored in closed containers. The leaves are normally used in tea, but green leaves or tender sprigs may be used in salads, fruit cups or rice.
LOVAGE <i>Levisticum officinale</i>	Carrot family. This is a tall aromatic herb that may be used fresh or dried. It imparts a celery flavor when used in soups, salads and fish.
MARJORAM <i>Origanum marjorana</i>	Mint family. Sweet marjoram is the most widely grown of the three species of marjoram. Fresh leaves can be used as needed during the season with the leaves and flowering top dried at the end of the growing season. The clean, dry leaves are stored for winter use. Many meat, egg and poultry dishes are improved by the flavor of marjoram.
MINT	Mint family. There are many varieties of mints, but in our area, spearmint (<i>Mentha spicata</i>) and peppermint (<i>M. piperita</i>) are grown commercially. These plants must be watched for their invasive characteristics. Fresh, green sprigs may be used for flavoring or leaves and flower tops cut for drying. Meat, soup, tea and fruit drinks are enhanced by these herbs.
ROSEMARY <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Mint family. The fresh or dried leaves may be used for special accent with soups, stews, poultry and sauces.
SAGE <i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Mint family. The leaves are normally dried and used for flavoring meats or making tea.
TARRAGON <i>Artemisia dracunculus</i>	Aster family. The leaves and tender tops can be harvested through the growing season or may be dried for winter use. To preserve flavor, they must be stored in sealed jars. These leaves form the leading flavor in green salads, salad dressings, fish sauces and some egg dishes.
THYME <i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Mint family. Thyme may be upright or a trailing type and is often used in rock gardens. The flowering tops are cut and dried for later use in flavoring meat, poultry, stuffing's, gravies, egg dishes and chowder.
WINTER SAVORY <i>Satureja montana</i>	Mint family. The tender tops can be used during the season in the same manner as summer savory or thyme. Dried leaves give an important accent to chicken and turkey stuffing, sausage and some egg dishes.

For more information:

- How to Grow Herbs*, A Sunset Book, Lane Books.
- The Herb Book*, A Bantam Book, John Lust.
- The Herbalist*, Clarence Meyer.
- The Herb Grower*, Quarterly, Falls Village, CT.
- Discovering the Folklore of Plants*, Margaret Baker.
- Herb Gardens of Delight*, Adelma Grenier Simmons.
- Health Plants of the World*, Francesco Bianchini, Francesco Corbetta.
- Herbs of the Pacific Northwest*, (LC 406) OSU Extension, \$8.00.

No endorsement of the books listed, nor criticism of other books not listed, is implied or intended.

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