HERB BASICS

There are three general categories of herbs:

Annuals: These include basil, cilantro, and dill.

Biennials: Parsley.

Perennials: Rosemary, Thyme, Oregano, Chives, Mint, Tarragon.

Most of these herbs grow well in our coastal climate. The major exception is basil. In the coastal areas, basil grows best in a greenhouse, cloche, or sunny windowsill.

PRESERVING HERBS

Freezing: Chop herbs and fill the sections of an ice cube tray. Carefully pour water, oil, or unsalted melted butter into each herb filled compartment and freeze. This method works well for basil, chives, dill, marjoram, mint, parsley, oregano, rosemary, tarragon and thyme.

Drying: Snip off healthy branches and remove the leaves from the bottom inch of the stem. Bundle several stems together with string or a rubber band and hang upside down in a warm airy room. Check them weekly until completely dry. Crumble or grind the leaves and place in jars. This works well for cilantro (the seeds are coriander), dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme. Herbs can also be dried in a food dryer at low temperature.

Herbal Vinegars: Rinse and thoroughly dry fresh herbs. Sterilize our bottles and dry thoroughly. Slightly bruise the herbs and stuff them into the bottles. Fill jar about 1/3 full with herbs. Bring the vinegar to a boil and carefully pour into bottles over the herbs. Allow to cool and seal the bottles with lid or cork. Refrigerate and allow to steep for 1-2 weeks. Herbs can then be strained out to prolong the life of your vinegar. Keep refrigerated.

You can also make herbal infused sugar, syrup, and oil.