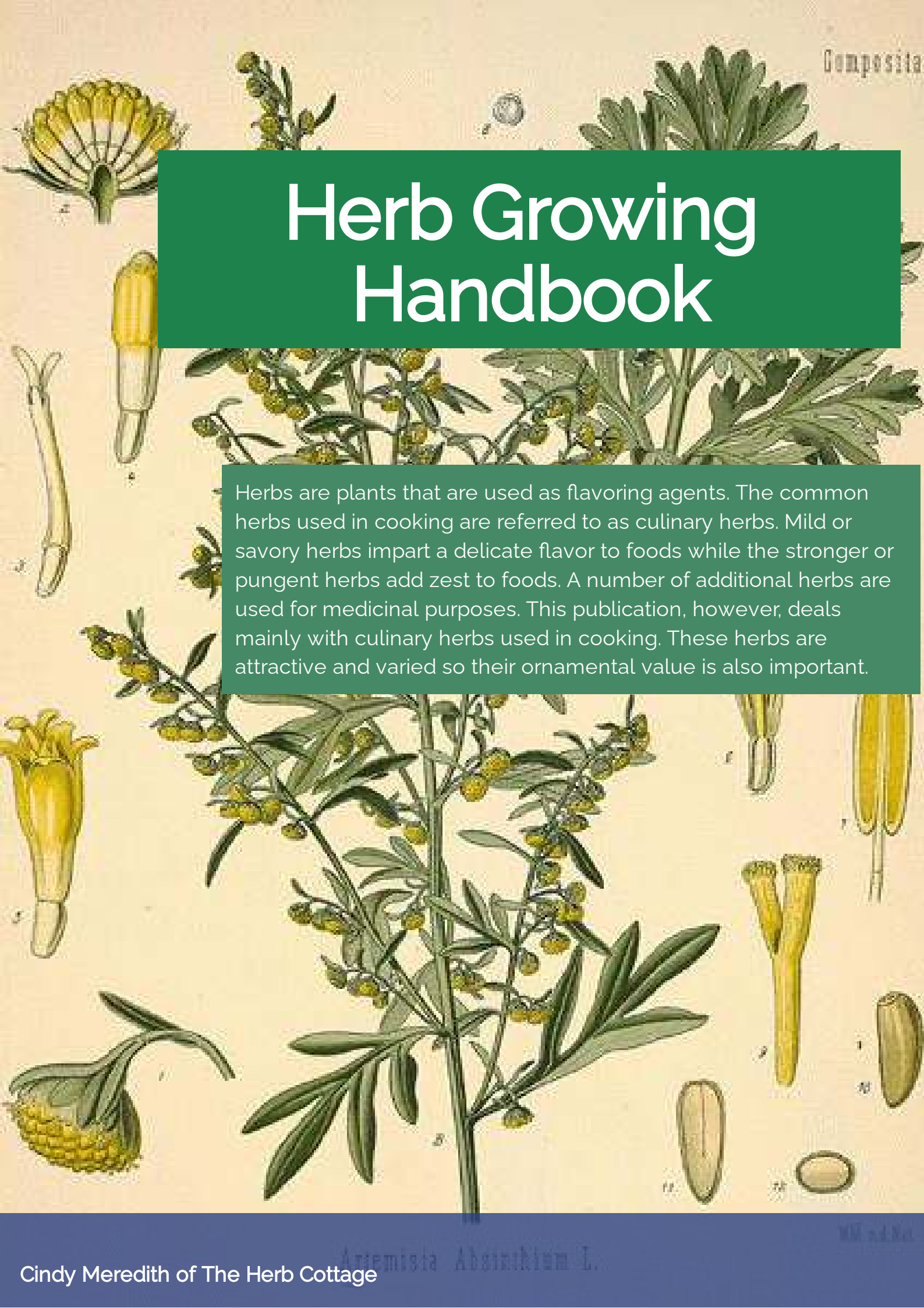


Composita

Herb Growing Handbook

Herbs are plants that are used as flavoring agents. The common herbs used in cooking are referred to as culinary herbs. Mild or savory herbs impart a delicate flavor to foods while the stronger or pungent herbs add zest to foods. A number of additional herbs are used for medicinal purposes. This publication, however, deals mainly with culinary herbs used in cooking. These herbs are attractive and varied so their ornamental value is also important.





The leaves of most herbs are the part of the plant that is used although the seeds or roots of some herbs can also be used. Herbs are used in small quantities, so usually only a few plants are necessary to provide sufficient fresh and dried herbs for the entire season.

LOCATION

The ornamental value of herbs enables them to be grown in flower beds, in rock gardens as borders or corner plantings, for instance. Many herbs grow very well in pots and containers making them ideal for those without a back or front yard. All that is needed is a small balcony, deck or patio.

Many gardeners establish a small herb garden in the area closest to the kitchen making it easy to pop outdoors and clip the fresh herbs needed for a meal. A small 6- to 10-foot square or rectangular area is sufficient for an outdoor, in-ground herb garden. A circle or free-form design can also be used. Container grown herbs can be placed on steps or porch for easy access.

As the Garden Grows



Care for the herb garden is similar to that of a vegetable or flower garden. Select a sunny, well drained location. If you have heavy soil, add organic amendments to make the soil drain better.

Water as necessary during dry periods after plants are established. Generally an inch a week is advisable if no rainfall is present.

If you have very sandy soil, organic amendments will help your soil retain water, yet still drain well. Addition of a balanced organic fertilizer if your soil is very poor may be advisable.



Mediterranean Herbs

Some herbs thrive on drier conditions than others. These are the Mediterranean herbs and are also many of the common culinary varieties. Thyme, rosemary, lavender, oregano and marjoram do well with little water once established. The soil must be extremely well drained especially for lavender and thyme varieties. It is easy to over water this group, so go easy on water and mulch with rocks or gravel to help dry the immediate environment to combat the effects of high humidity.

Establishing the Herb Garden



Guide To Successful Herb Growing

Establish annual and biennial herbs, (basil, parsley, cilantro, fennel, dill) by planting seeds directly in the garden or starting seeds indoors for later transplanting to the garden.



To save your own seed for planting the next season, harvest the entire seed head after it has dried on the plant. Dill, basil, fennel and cilantro are easy varieties to save. Allow the seeds to dry in a protected location that is cool and dry. After the seeds are thoroughly dry, thresh the seed from the heads and discard the trash. Store the seeds in labeled jars or envelopes in a dark, cool, dry location.

Seeds such as dill, caraway, anise or coriander (the seed from the leafy cilantro plant) are also used for flavoring. Perennial herbs (oregano, rosemary, chives, lavender, thyme...) can be propagated by cuttings or by division. Chive clumps are easily divided. Cuttings of rosemary are easily rooted in a light potting soil in a shady location. Ground layering works quite well on rosemary, oregano, thymes and lavender.

In general, cool season varieties are planted in the fall in most of Texas, and many hardy perennials do best if planted in the fall so their roots can be established before the stress of summer heat and humidity.

HERBS FOR TEXAS GARDENS



Aloe Vera

Use the fresh juice for minor burns, insect bites and rashes. It seems that the less care you give this plant, the better it grows. Likes shade. Good potted specimen as it is only winter hardy in the very southern reaches of the state.



Artemisia species

Perennial.

A group of plants now used mainly for landscaping because of their silvery gray foliage.

Includes Wormwood, Southernwood, Silver Queen, Silver King and Dusty Miller.

Very tough, insect free plants that should be used more in the landscape. Not edible.



Basil

Ocimum basilicum

Annual

Many varieties including Genovese, Spicy Globe, Lemon, Cinnamon, Holy (Tulsi), Licorice, Purple Ruffles, Thai and Sweet.

Sweet or Genovese is the tomato herb and a staple in Italian cooking. Freeze the fresh leaves for future use or make a zesty pesto.

[Here is a link to an easy Pesto Recipe.](#)
And, some ideas for more Pesto.



Borage

Borago officinalis

Annual

Young leaves taste of cucumber used in salads. Blue star shaped flowers are often candied and used to decorate cakes and pastries. Or freeze flowers in ice cubes for a decorative addition to tea or lemonade.

Borage attracts bees to the garden. Start from seed late fall or early spring.



Catnip

Nepeta cataria

Tender Perennial

Catnip is a multi-purpose plant. The tea is very pleasant with a lemon-mint flavor and fragrance.

Along with fresh catnip planted in containers indoors year-round, catnip toys filled with dried leaves will provide your feline friends with hours of fun. But be warned; they may ignore you for a while!

Catnip is very hardy and grows in almost any soil; self-sows readily



Chamomile

Matricaria recutita

Annual

Feathery, green foliage with small daisy like flowers that are used to brew a sleep inducing tea. Also known as Manzanilla. Likes cool weather. Sow seed fall/winter for early spring blooms. Self sows easily.



Source

Chives

Allium schoenoprasum

Perennial

The smallest member of the onion family. Use leaves to give a mild onion flavor to dishes. Garlic chives are much easier to grow and are used in Asian cooking for their mild garlic flavor. Easy to grow from seed. To harvest chives, clip off the whole leaf and use what you need.



Cilantro

Coriandrum sativum

Annual

Well known in Texas for the use of its leaves in Mexican dishes and salsa. Dried seeds (coriander) have an orangey flavor and are used in pastries, sausage, cooked fruit.

Coriander is an important ingredient in pickling spices and curry powder.

Likes cooler weather. Plant early in the spring or fall in the southern half of the state. Difficult to grow during summer. Freeze leaves for summer use in salsa and other dishes.



Comfrey

Symphytum officinalis

Perennial

Large plant with coarse leaves and white flowers. Very invasive once established, so be careful where you plant it. Used mostly for medicinal properties.

Will do wonders when added to a compost pile. Start from division or root sections. Does well in a large container.

Not recommended for internal use.



Dill

Anethum graveolens

Reseeding Annual

One of the easiest herbs to grow from seed. Plant early in the spring or in the fall, it will sprout when it's ready. Used for pickling, with fish, breads and flavored vinegars.

Freeze leaves for later use. Large green caterpillars that love to eat dill, parsley and fennel will turn into Swallowtail butterflies, so plant enough for you and them!



Epazote

Dysphania ambrosioides

Tender Perennial/Reseeding Annual

A very weedy herb whose main use is to cook with pinto beans to prevent gas. Use about 5 medium leaves to a pound of beans.

Also makes an interesting tea.

If you let this plant go to seed you will have it everywhere.

Freeze leaves for later use, as it is not winter hardy.



Bronze Fennel

Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare

Annual/ Tender Perennial

Finnocchio is an Italian variety that grows a large above-ground bulb that is sliced and eaten raw or cooked.

Grows like dill with a sweeter, anise flavor. Plant from seed in fall or early spring.

Bronze fennel is a very attractive variety that looks pretty in a flower bed. Leafy parts and dried seeds of both the green and bronze are used for flavoring.



Garlic

Allium sativum

Annual

Not a true herb, but often included in herb listings. Plant bulbs in fall for a late spring harvest. Whole books have been written on its cultivation and use. Leaves may be used like chives.



Lavender

Lavandula spp.

Perennial

With its gray/green foliage and sweet scented flower stalks, lavender is a must for any herb garden.

Can be tricky to grow in the southern half of the state.

Needs excellent drainage, full sun and good air flow around the plant to combat high humidity. A gravel or rock mulch helps keep the surrounding environment dry. Many varieties available.



Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis

Annual/Tender Perennial

Member of the mint family with strong lemon scent and flavor. Easily started from seed, cuttings, division or roots. Spreads rapidly.

Likes some afternoon shade. Use leaves for hot or cold tea, fruit cup garnish, or anywhere you want a good lemon flavor. Good bee attractor when in bloom.



Lemon Grass

Cymbopogon spp.

Annual/Tender Perennial

Tropical grass prized for its lemon flavored leaves. Use leaves in hot or cold tea, in Asian cuisine, soups, with chicken or fish. Roots are winter hardy in southern half of the state, in the northern regions with a good mulch. Start from division, or seed for a variety known as East Indian Lemon Grass.

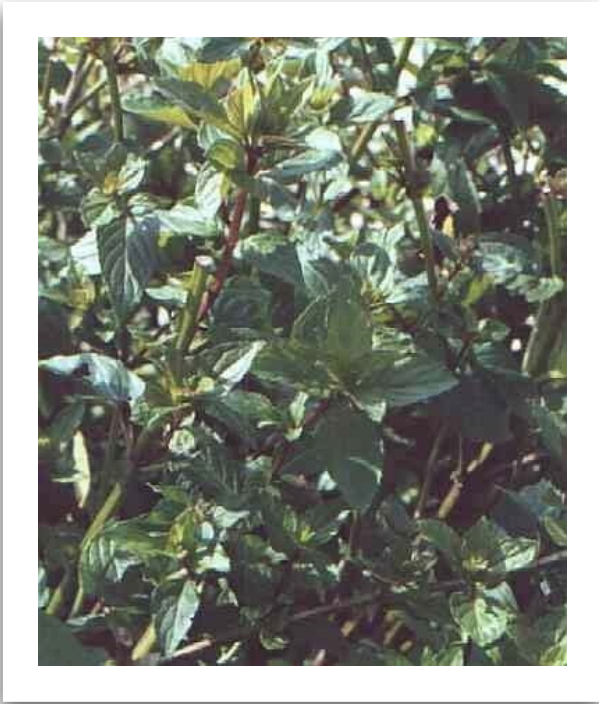


Lemon Verbena

Tender Perennial

Aloysia citrodora

A small shrub with very strong lemon scented leaves. Sometimes known as the Queen of Lemon Herbs, it makes a delicious tea. Start from cuttings or transplants. Reliably hardy, highly desirable deciduous shrub.



Mints

Mentha spp.

Perennial) With almost endless varieties, mints are the hardiest and easiest herbs to grow. Very invasive, will soon take over any bed they are planted in, so container growing is a great option. Mints do well in full sun to part shade with average water. Use in hot and cold tea for a refreshing drink.

Some mints are seed grown, but many of the flavored ones: orange, grapefruit, apple, chocolate, ginger, variegated pineapple are easily started from cuttings or by digging rooted stems from the garden.



Oregano

Cras sit amet nibh libero, in gravida nulla. Nulla vel metus scelerisque ante sollicitudin commodo. Cras purus odio, vestibulum in vulputate at, tempus viverra turpis. Fusce condimentum nunc ac nisi vulputate fringilla. Donec lacinia congue felis in faucibus.

There are over 400 plants that at one time or another have been used as we use oregano. One of the most common and easily available is Greek Oregano, the low, small leaf, spreading variety. A shrubby variety known as Italian is also available.

Some Greek varieties have very little flavor, so be sure to taste any herb plant you are planning to purchase.

There are several plants known as Mexican Oregano, which are not in the *Origanum* family at all, but have a delicious oregano-like flavor and are popular for Southwest dishes.

Oregano likes well drained soil and lots of sun.



Flat Leaf or Italian Parsley at The Herb Cottage

Parsley

Petroselinum spp.

(Biennial) Another must for the herb garden, parsley also makes an attractive border for a flower or vegetable garden.

The two most widely used types are curly and "Italian" or flat-leaf. Many people think the flat-leaf variety has a better flavor, but it does tend to go to seed more quickly. Both are started from seed with patience, in the fall, as they are winter hardy in most of the state.

Parsley likes a little shade for summer growing otherwise full sun brings out the flavor best. Very high in Vitamin C, parsley is a good addition to fresh salads.



Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis

Tender Perennial

Rosemary is one of the easiest herbs to grow in Texas as it thrives in our hot climate. It is considered very drought tolerant and can be killed by over watering.

Rosemary comes in two basic forms: upright and trailing or prostrate. The trailing variety has light blue blooms in spring and throughout the summer.

Rosemary is used with pork, chicken and is great on roast potatoes.

Rosemary is easily propagated from cuttings or by ground layering.



Rue

Ruta graveolens

Perennial

This herb grows easily from seed or transplants. The yellow blossoms are a great butterfly attractor.

In full sun, the leaves and flowers can cause dermatitis in some people, so handle it with care (or gloves..).



Sage

Salvia officinalis

Short-lived Perennial

Sage is another plant that doubles as a durable addition to the landscape in Texas if it has good drainage. It is very sensitive to over watering. The common green variety can be grown from seed. It appreciates some shade in the afternoons or grow it in dappled light.

Many varieties are available such as golden, tri-color, pineapple, and clary.

Sage is a must for poultry stuffing and for use in "breakfast sausage". Leaves can be dried for later use.



Salad Burnet

Sanguisorba minor

Perennial

Salad Burnet is not as commonly seen in nurseries as some other herbs. It is easy to grow from seed and is very attractive in the herb garden.

Use leaves in salads, salad dressings or any dish you wish to have a cucumber flavor without the "burp". Attractive plant to use for borders. Does best in cooler weather.



Source

Guide To Successful Herb Growing

Herbs are such rewarding plants to grow and so versatile. Herb gardens can be neat and tidy with pathways and a geometric design. Herb gardens can be done more in the cottage garden style with a relaxed and open design. Herb gardens can be grown in containers on decks, porches and balconies. Herb gardens can be grown indoors. Herb gardens can be grown in and among vegetable gardens to attract beneficial and predator insects.

The choice of plants depends entirely on what you like to do with your herbs. Cooking, crafting, making body care and wellness products, natural dyes or just enjoying the butterflies and bees that herbs bring to the garden are all reasons to plant and grow an herb garden.

Following, are a couple of easy and flavorful ways to use your herbs.

For more information on growing and using your herbs, please visit The Herb Cottage website, theherbcottage.com.

HERB VINEGAR – SO SIMPLE

What tastes good, has only two calories per tablespoon and is easy to prepare?

Herbal vinegars offer all this and more. They add flavor to salads, marinades, sauces

Start by picking (or buying) your herbs and washing in cool water. Lay them on paper towels and allow to air dry.

The basic recipe calls for 1 cup fresh herbs to 2 cups vinegar. Use either red or white wine, cider or rice vinegar. (You can use white vinegar, but the final product will have a sharper taste.)

To strain the vinegar, use a funnel and coffee filter and pour through until all bits and pieces are strained out. That's it!! Pour into a clean, decorative bottle and add a few sprigs of herbs to decorate and you have just made a real taste treat.

Place the dry herbs in a wide-mouth jar, bruise with a spoon and add the vinegar. Cap, shake a little and store in a cool, dark place for 4 to 6 weeks. Check the taste after processing by placing a teaspoon of vinegar on some bread (French is nice). If you like the taste, you are ready to strain the vinegar. If the taste isn't strong enough, let it steep another week or so, and try it again.

Here are some herbal combinations that work well together. By the end of summer, you'll be inventing you own "designer vinegar":

- ~chives, dill, parsley
- ~parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme
- ~basil and thyme

- ~garlic chives, lemon grass, lemon thyme
- ~dill, chives salad burnet, garlic chives, parsley
- ~red rubin or purple ruffles basil with any lemon herb

Lemon Balm Quick Bread

- 1 Cup Sugar
- 8 Tablespoons Butter
- ¼ Cup Lemon Balm Leaves
- 2 Large Eggs
- 1 ½ Cup All-purpose Flour
- 1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
- ⅛ Teaspoon Sale
- ½ Cup Milk
- Grated Rind of one lemon

Grate the lemon peel and remove the juice from the lemon. Reserve the juice for the glaze.

Cream butter, sugar, and finely chopped leaves. Add eggs and beat well to get a smooth consistency. Add remaining ingredients (flour through lemon rind). Pour into one large or four miniature greased loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes if using a large pan or 25-30 minutes if using miniature pans.

Before removing from the pans, use a toothpick to prick holes in the crust. Pour Lemon Balm Glaze over the top while the loaves are still warm.

Allow to cool completely before removing from the pan. Loaves can be frozen for later use.

Lemon Balm Glaze

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped lemon balm leaves
- juice from one fresh lemon (about 4 tablespoons)

*TIP: To avoid having bits of chopped herbs in the bread, steep the chopped leaves in the liquid for a half an hour or so. If you

RESOURCES

When looking for growing and gardening information on herbs, try and find books and articles written specifically for the southern United States. Many resources are perfectly good for the midwest, California and the west coast or the east coast, but do not address the unique growing conditions we have here in Texas.

BOOKS for the South and Texas

- What Can I Do With My Herbs? by Judy Barrett
- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay
- Herbs for Texas by Howard Garrett
- The Big Book of Herbs by Arthur O. Tucker and Thomas DeBaggio
- The Herb Society of America Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses by Deni Bown

WEB SITES, GROWING IN TEXAS

- [The Herb Cottage](#)
- [American Botanical Council](#)
- [Aggie Horticulture](#)
- [Texas Gardener Magazine](#)
- [Fall Gardening](#)
- [Go Texan Program](#)- click on Publications and E-Zines

HERB ORGANIZATIONS

- [Herb Society of America](#)
- [International Herb Association](#)
- [American Botanical Council](#)

Good Luck and Great Gardening to you from The Herb Cottage.

Cindy

theherbcottage.com cindy@theherbcottage.com