

Container Herb Gardening

Unlike many other types of gardening, herbs are very inexpensive and easy to maintain. The beginner can be an instant success. There is room for all skill levels, and many different garden situations. In terms of modern usage, herbs can be broken down into three different groupings.

Culinary herbs

Ornamental herbs

Medicinal herbs

Culinary herbs:

These are the herbs we are all most familiar with basil, rosemary, parsley and oregano, etc. In growing these plants, we not only provide ourselves the joy of gardening, but the satisfaction of eating the fruits of our labor. The flavorings that herb gardens provide to our daily menu can truly enhance the eating experience. Ask anyone who uses fresh herbs in their cooking and they'll tell you that dried herbs can't compare. Some are perennial, some are annual and with few exceptions, all are easily grown. Herbs can be grown from window boxes, containers raised beds or as borders.

Ornamental herbs:

Ornamental herbs are almost a contradiction in terms. Herbs have traditionally been plants that have had values other than the aesthetic. The plants however, remain as a beautiful accent to our gardens. Their aromatic smell and wonderful soft silvery foliage drive many gardeners to grow them year after year. Many of the plants thought of as healers are holdovers from superstition. This only adds to the mystique of herb gardening.

Medicinal herbs:

While this type of herb lost most of its value in the 20th century, one only has to walk down the aisle of your local drugstore to see its comeback. Echinacea, valerian, ginkgo, and garlic are all back on the shelves as medicine. Lavender, roses, mint, and basil are being used for aromatherapies to ease the stresses of modern life. We are once again finding healing from nature. It is unlikely that most gardeners would be willing to devote the time to make their own herbal extract. Most medicinal herbs now fall into the ornamental category.

Herb container gardening

Most herb gardens at home are container gardens. The doorway from the kitchen, a window box, the paved area at the head of a driveway, anywhere the sun shines is the perfect place. All things being equal, this is probably the best style herb gardening available. The informal jumble of pots by the kitchen door of rosemary, lemon grass and basil can be brought in during the winter months with very little fuss.

The different glazes and textures of the pots lend color to what could have been a very green garden, and containers allow the adjustment of soil mixtures to suit specific plants. Beautiful eatable gardens can be grown in pots or other containers. An old tea pot filled with thyme or lavender would add accent to any kitchen bay window. Pots also allow for separation by type or a collection of compatible plants.

Window-boxes have all the benefits previously mentioned, plus the added attraction of being just outside a kitchen window. To sum up, containers are easy and fun. It's a highly recommend style of herb gardening, especially to those just starting out.

Raised bed herb gardens

Closely related to container gardens, raised beds are a great way to herb garden. The soil can be conditioned to suit the plants; this is important, as many of our favorite herb plants require more drainage than regular soils allow. Raised beds are also wonderful for older or handicapped gardeners, allowing easy access without bending or stooping. The raised beds also perform another function that mirrors the container gardens; they contain the plants. Plants like mint can become a terror if let loose in the landscape, and weeds can choke the life out of an herb garden. Raised beds and containers keep the wild ones in, and keep the bad guys out.

In conclusion, herb gardening is not a difficult hobby to become involved with, and the rewards can be great. Unlike many other types of gardening, the plants are very inexpensive and easy to maintain. The beginner can be an instant success, and as time goes by, develop their overall gardening skills. We have several books on herb gardening in the store. Or if you have any questions please ask, we will be more than happy to assist you.

Tips for growing your Herb garden

Various herbs can share the same pot, but make sure they are compatible by reading the care tags. Water-loving basil and curly parsley make good partners, whereas rosemary, sage, and oregano all prefer a slightly drier environment.

Try different varieties of one plant, they should mix well and present different levels of texture while providing a slightly different taste.

Classic terra-cotta pots are an excellent choice for container plantings because their porosity allows air and water to move through the walls, which is healthy for root development.

The container should have sufficient drainage holes, place more holes in the bottom of the container if it is not draining quickly after watering. Place the container on blocks raising it about a 1/4 inch above the surface.

During the summer heat, your pots might need a drink almost every day, monitor the moisture of the soil at the end of every day. When necessary increase or decrease the frequency of watering as required.

Most herbs are naturally low-maintenance. Regular harvesting will keep the plants productive.