



# HERB CARE



**MEDITERRANEAN HERBS (basil, tarragon, marjoram, oregano, rosemary)** require light, sandy soil mixed with compost made mostly of plants (leaves). They also love to have cool roots under a rock and thrive in raised beds with lots of compost. Good drainage is a must. Most are sun lovers, but some perennials manage well in semi-shade.

**BASIL** – Annual. Loves sun. Feed 1x/month following a large harvest. Plant seeds in succession to keep it sweet (newer leaves are sweetest) and to have a good supply. Pinch after plant has 4 sets of leaves, taking off top 2 sets. Once plant reaches 18 inches, cut down to just above the fourth lowest set of leaves. Propagate in water. Basil grows easily from seed. Once cut, do not refrigerate, but place in water. Does not dry well. Instead, chop and freeze in ice trays with water and freeze cubes, or make pesto, or place leaves in jars covered with olive oil.

**CATMINT** – Layer (see thyme).

**CHERVIL** – Annual; partial shade. Seeds quickly and needs several sowings a season for fresh supply. Sow in late winter or early spring. Feed 1x/3weeks after germination. Harvest when 3” tall cutting from the outside in; cut flowers just as they open for garnish or salads. Self-sowing. Dry to preserve.

**CHIVES** – Perennial; sun or light shade; good under tall roses. Top dress with 2” of compost in spring and fall. Divide every 3 years (in early fall cut back foliage to 2” and dig up clump. Tease apart and replant clumps of 10 bulbs.) Harvest by grasping small section from outside of clump and cutting to ground level. Pour one cup diluted liquid fertilizer over clump after shearing it back. Freeze only.

**GARLIC CHIVES** – Replant after dividing in 6-inch sections of rhizome which often has bulbs attached.

**CILANTRO** – Annual, but self-sows; sun and afternoon shade once heat increases. Plant every 2 weeks. Feed 1x/3 weeks until plants go to seed. After a large harvest, pour ½ cup diluted liquid fertilizer around each plant. Clip off flowers just after they open or let seed (coriander).

**CORIANDER** – Clip the seed head just after it forms when seeds are green and shiny and pull off seeds or wait to cut the seed heads until 3/4s of seeds turn light brown. Hang heads upside down in paper bag. Leave some seeds to sow for next crop of cilantro

**DILL** – Annual, but self-sows. Needs sun. Seeds quickly and needs several sowings a season for fresh supply. Feed 1x/3 weeks. In late summer, allow a few flowers to set seed; harvest leaves anytime by cutting back to main stalk; harvest seeds just as they begin to turn brown and treat like coriander. Dries well.

**FRENCH TARRAGON** – Perennial; full sun to partial shade. Divide at root or use stem cuttings. Can grow 2' high and wide. Rarely blooms and never sets seed. Dig up every 3<sup>rd</sup> spring and divide because roots grow inward and will strangle the plant. Tarragon has a shallow root system, so mulch over winter. Harvest sparingly the first year; after that, use as needed; can be cut back completely twice during growing season. Doesn't need fertilizer except when starting a plant; water sparingly. Store in frig like parsley.

**HYSSOP** – drought tolerant

**LAVENDER** – Drought tolerant perennial; likes semi-shade and sun. From the Latin word lavare (to wash). Expect only a few blossoms on 1-year-old plants; maximum flower production by third year. Cut back flower stems after bloom period passes. Rejuvenate old or ragged plants by cutting back branches to a natural form. Butterflies love it. To harvest, gather flowering stems by handful just as flowers open and cut. Pick leaves anytime. Dry flowering stems by laying on trays or hanging in small bunches. Needs little fertilizing.

**LEMON BALM** – Perennial; accepts partial shade to full sun. Attracts bees. Was used to polish and scent furniture (use handful to do this). Reaches up to 3' high. Start from cuttings, root division and plant in moist fertile easily draining soil. Reseeds easily and spreads wide; best in containers for small garden. Harvest as needed. Fertilize with 19-19-19 or with blood meal, cottonseed meal or compost.

**LEMON VERBENA** – Perennial, sun, but not frost hardy here. Attracts bees and butterflies. Prune in late spring and summer; if ragged looking after frost time, reduce by one-third to stimulate new growth and to keep compact. Dry on screen and place in cool place for a week; harvest as needed. Use a water-soluble fertilizer 1x/month during growing season.

**MARJORAM** – Perennial; sun. Needs little water once established. Good under roses and rudbeckia. Feed 1x/month in ground and 1x/2weeks in pots. Harvest as needed. See oregano.

**MEXICAN MINT MARIGOLD** (*Tugida lucida*) – Perennial; full sun to moderate afternoon shade. Good substitute for tarragon; semi-hardy perennial. Also called Texas Tarragon. Divide in spring or fall or layer, cover with soil and it will produce new rooted plant to cut off. As plants set seed, let them dry out. Allow dormancy over winter or they'll rot; tolerates any soil and does well in containers

**MINT** – Perennial; sun or semi-shade. Compost 2” in early spring. Cut plant back by half in early summer when plant forms flower buds and again in late summer; cut stems off at soil line in fall. Divide after 1-2 seasons. In spring just as mint begins to emerge, run knife around edge of pot to loosen root ball. Pull out and divide into quarters, untangling roots of each division. Wait to make large harvest until flowers form. Cut back no further than 2/3 of each stem at one time. Dry or freeze. Harvest any time. Hang bunches to dry or spread on screens. Fertilize container mint in spring with liquid and then every 4-6 wks after that. Keep water off stems and leaves because mint rots easily.

**OREGANO** – see marjoram. Perennial; sun. In late spring, cut each plant back by a third; repeat in summer when flower buds form; cut back to 6” above ground in fall. Harvest with each cutting. Divide potted and in-ground plants annually to prevent dying out in middle. Dig up and use sharp knife to cut out any dead. Divide the plant into 4-inch wide sections and replant. Propagate by layering (see thyme). Dry.

**PARSLEY** – Biennial; sun or semi-shade. Feed 1x/3 weeks. Wait to harvest until 6” tall with several stems. Does not transplant well. Harvest from outside in at ground level or cut all stems down to 2 inches above soil and new leaves will regrow. Freeze or dry.

**ROSEMARY** – Perennial; sun but prefers semi-shade. Best grown in raised bed or in a pot double the diameter of root ball set on pot feet. Needs little watering. Feed pots 1x/2 weeks and garden plants 1x/month. Cut back the entire plant by a third in midsummer and dry. Stop harvesting a month before frost. Frost tender (under 25 degrees). Make new plants from layering. Symbolizes awakening.

**SAGE** – Perennial; likes semi-shade. Drought tolerant; just barely moist soil (dry down to second knuckle). When new growth appears in early spring, cut back each stem on mature plants by a third, making the cut right above a set of leaves. Foliar feed when new growth appears in spring and again around the summer solstice (e.g. June 21<sup>st</sup>). In early July cut the tips of each stem back 3 inches and dry for winter use. Harvest mature plants at 6- to 8-week intervals beginning in late spring, cutting back 3 to 5 inches. Culinary sages rarely send up flower spikes, but when they do, snip off flower stalks just after the blossoms open. Propagate by layering (see thyme).

Garden Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

Golden – frost tender

Purple – frost tender

**SOCIETY GARLIC** – Tender perennial, full sun (won't survive below 29 degrees). Likes light sandy soil. Divide bulblets from mother in fall or early spring; set 8-12 inches apart, just below surface of soil; divide when crowded; also dig up and bring in house for winter; use when needed for culinary purposes.

**SUMMER SAVORY** – Annual; sun; drought tolerant. Self-sows. To encourage lush growth, cut bushy tops back regularly. Begin harvesting when plant reaches 6-8". Snip off buds after blooming. Entire plant can be clipped and used. Do not fertilize.

**SWEET BAY** – (Grecian laurel; *Laurus nobilis*); sunny sheltered spot, protect from frost (; as shrub, can be maintained at 2-8 ft high and wide; use leaves as needed.

**THYME** – perennial evergreen; sun (at least 4 hours/day), **drought tolerant**. Likes light fairly dry rocky soil. Easy to grow from seed on moist soil and cover with fine layer of sifted soil; water well and keep evenly moist. Seedlings emerge when soil near 70 degrees. Best in pot or raised bed to avoid too much wet. Foliar feed when new growth appears in spring and again around June 21<sup>st</sup> (summer solstice). Keep stems pliable by pruning back by a third in spring after last frost. After it flowers, gather plant together in one hand and cut off spent blossoms, making cut just into the leaves below. If you want a large dry harvest, cut back the plant by half in early summer just before it blooms. Stop harvesting one month before first hard frost. Needs little fertilizing. Bees love it.

English (*Thymus vulgaris*) – doesn't divide well; try layering; in early summer cover a secured branch with damp soil (keep moist). Sever stem once it's robust and transplant to a small pot, allowing the roots to establish for 8 weeks before planting in garden

Lemon (*Thymus citriodorus*) – divide plant growing in garden every other year and container-grown annually; dig up plant, shake away excess soil from roots and use

sharp knife to divide the plant into smaller pieces; replant small 3 to 4 inch-wide divisions

Aureus (Thymus citriodorus) – golden lemon thyme; **protect in winter**

**WINTER SAVORY** – Evergreen; sun. 12” high; densely spreading. Easiest to grow from layering, cuttings or root division (and from seed in spring). Prune regularly to encourage fresh growth. Requires less water than summer savory and is cold hardy to -10 degrees. Harvest any time. Cut branches before bloom if planning to dry.

## USES FOR HERBS

**Bouquet garni** – 2-3 sprigs thyme, 1 sprig marjoram or oregano, some parsley, bay leaf

**Chervil** – (add near end) soups

**Cilantro** - Freeze Cilantro In Cubes

This freezing method creates small cubes, ideal for popping into soups or stews to add a burst of cilantro's unique, fresh flavor (plus a nice hit of green). For this method, before the cilantro can be put into the ice cube tray, it needs to be pureed with a liquid. Simply whirl the cilantro in a blender or food processor with enough water or olive oil to make a thick puree. Pour into a clean ice cube tray or small covered containers and place in the freezer. Once frozen through, transfer the cilantro cubes to a resealable plastic bag for long-term storage—they will last in the freezer up to 6 months.

**Dill** – (add near end) omelettes, sauces, cucumbers, salmon

**French Tarragon** – fresh is best, but if using dry, substitute one-third the amount. (add near end) chicken, deviled eggs, fish, veal, stuffed peppers, squash, tomatoes, stuffing, vinegar (with white wine vinegar)

**Lemon balm** – (add near end) soups, stews, fish, lamb, fruit and veggie salads, baked goods, tea, lemonade, white wine, liqueurs (chartreuse)

**Lemon verbena** – (add fresh near end) fruit, cooked sauces, pies, cobblers, cookies; add 1-2 tsp dried to rice pilaf; liquors, perfumes, potpourri, sachets, wreaths

**Marjoram** – green beans, soups, sauces, meat, cornbread

**Mexican Mint Marigold** – see French Tarragon; fresh leaves & flowers in green and fruit salads; chop to prevent oils from escaping; tea from flowers, also blended with black tea for flavor

**Mints** – teas, freeze small sprigs in cubes for drinks; potatoes, salads, steamed veggies, yogurt, butter or cream cheese, jellies and lamb!

**Parsley** – (add near end)

**Rosemary** – lamb, roast potatoes and onions

**Sage** – meat, stuffing, baked squash, dried beans, pasta with oil, leaves and Parmesan, minced in mashed potatoes, vinegars

**Society Garlic** – clip leaves and flowers; stir fry; salads, soups, egg dishes, steamed veggies

**Summer Savory** – See Winter Savory; egg dishes, creamy soups and rich cheesy casseroles, cooked veggies

**Sweet Bay** – (add at the start for any slow dish) stews, roasts, casseroles, soups, spaghetti sauce, wreaths

**Thyme** – chicken, fish, eggs, vinaigrette, roasted tomatoes; soups, salads, stuffing, pork, lamb, marinades and vinegars, oils

**Winter Savory** – alternative to sage in dressing; combined with basil, it's a good substitute for salt and pepper; bean dishes, including soups, salads and spreads. See Summer Savory.