



Culinary Herbs in the Garden

Culinary herbs have been used for seasoning food throughout recorded history and they are extremely well suited to growing in our Mediterranean climate. Culinary herbs all prefer well drained soil, sun, good air circulation, and infrequent deep watering. If you are not growing the herbs for seed, prune off the flowers to encourage the plant to put its energy into the leaves and not into seed production. Harvest young fresh leaves in the morning. Some herbs can become invasive so they are best grown in pots. Herbs in the landscape should be labeled so that you will not eat inedible plants by mistake. Try not to use pesticides or fungicides on edible plants. Carefully follow pre-harvest interval (PHI) if using a pesticide. Do not use herbicides near edibles.

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DESCRIPTION	GROWING REQUIREMENTS
Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Summer annual; Bushy with shiny rounded green, red, or purple leaves. Ht 12-24"	Full sun, regular water. Plant in the spring when the weather is above 50°. Prune off flowers for longest harvest. May benefit from afternoon shade.
Bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Aromatic shrub or tree with leathery oblong green leaves. Ht. to 65 ft.	Well drained soil, full sun to light shade. Harvest leaves year round. Plant in a pot when space is limited.
Chervil	<i>Anthriscus cerefolium</i>	Cool season annual; parsley-like foliage. Ht. 18"	Produces flowers and seeds above 85°. Plant in the fall or early spring in a sunny location.
Chives Garlic Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i> <i>Allium tuberosum</i>	Perennial; mild member of the onion family; cylindrical leaves and flowers are edible. Ht 18-24"	Full sun, well drained soil; Space plants 8-10" apart. Reseeds easily so remove flowers quickly. Both types of chives may die back in the winter.
Cilantro/ Coriander	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Cool season annual; parsley-like foliage with seeds produced in the fall. Ht 12-36"	Full sun to partial shade, rich, well-drained soil. Plant in fall or early spring and continuously cut the foliage. At 85° flowers produced; harvest seeds when dry.

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DESCRIPTION	GROWING REQUIREMENTS
Cumin	<i>Cuminum cyminum</i>	Summer annual; Small, long and narrow leaves with white to pink flowers. Ht 4-20"	Plant when above 60°. Full sun, well drained soil. Light shade above 85°. Harvest seeds when dry.
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	Cool season annual; feathery blue green leaves with seeds produced in the summer. Ht 18-36"	Full sun, well drained, moist soil. Harvest leaves for use fresh or allow seed heads to dry for later use.
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Perennial; feathery green or bronze foliage. Ht 48-60"	Full sun, well drained soil. Foliage can be cut regularly. Harvest seed before it is fully dry. Do not plant near dill.
Garlic	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Winter annual; harvest bulbs in early summer.	Plant individual garlic cloves 4-6" apart and 2" deep in rich, well drained soil in full sun to partial shade. Plant in late fall and harvest when tops die back to 2-3 green leaves. Spring garlic can be harvested and used like green onions.
Horseradish	<i>Armoracia rusticana</i>	Perennial; pungent peppery root. Ht 24-36"	As horseradish is invasive, plant roots in a large, deep pot and cover with 2" of soil. Full sun. Keep moist in the summer and harvest in the late fall.
Lemon grass	<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Perennial; blue green grass-like leaves. Ht 36"	Grow in a pot as it spreads easily and is frost tender. It likes moisture retentive soil and full sun.
Marjoram	<i>Origanum majorana</i>	Perennial; low growing bush with small grey-green leaves and wiry stems. Ht 10-20"	Well drained soil in full sun. Harvest leaves spring through fall.
Mint	<i>Mentha spp</i>	Perennial; a profusion of species and leaf types. Ht 18-48"	Mint can become VERY invasive; it is best to grow it in a container with well drained soil and partial shade during the summer. Mint will spread quickly if allowed to go to seed; cut off flowers before they form seeds.

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DESCRIPTION	GROWING REQUIREMENTS
Oregano	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Perennial; small oval grey-green leaves. Can form large mounds. Ht 12-24"	Well drained soil in full sun. Cut back severely for a bushy plant. Prune before flowering.
Parsley	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	Biennial usually grown as an annual; both flat and curly varieties can be grown here. Ht. 8-36"	Well drained, moist soil and full sun in the winter with light shade in the summer. Harvest year round, will reseed the second year. Plant in the spring as it will go to seed after the winter.
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Perennial; lush, needle-like leaves. Good garden shrub. Ht. 8-48"	Full sun, good air circulation and infrequent summer water.
Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Perennial; soft medium size grey-green leaves. Ht 12-24"	Well drained soil, good air circulation and full sun to light shade.
Tarragon (French)	<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i> 'Sativa'	Perennial: Long narrow dark green leaves. Ht 24-48"	Well drained soil, full sun with afternoon shade in the summer. Best in a pot as it will spread.
Thyme	<i>Thymus spp</i>	Perennial; small leaves with woody stems. Ht. 6-18" Many types of culinary thyme are available; they each have unique flavors, try several.	Sandy soil with excellent drainage and good air circulation. Full sun to light shade.

REFERENCES:

California Master Gardener Handbook, UC ANR Publication 3382, 2009.

The Random House Book of Herbs, R. Phillips and N Foy, 1990.

[http://franklin.osu.edu/topics/master-gardener-volunteer-program/documents/HGS 2010 Herbs.pdf](http://franklin.osu.edu/topics/master-gardener-volunteer-program/documents/HGS_2010_Herbs.pdf)

Compiled by Karen Slinkard, Yolo County Master Gardener
Reviewed by Patricia Carpenter, Yolo County Master Gardener

All contents copyright © 2012. The Regents of the University of California All rights reserved

The University of California Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can be found at <http://ucanr.org/sites/anrstaff/files/107734.doc>)

Inquiries regarding ANR's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to Linda Marie Manton, Affirmative Action Contact, University of California, Davis, Agriculture and Natural Resources, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616, (530) 752-0495.