CULINARY HERBS:
FROM GARDEN TO GOURMET

Master Gardeners
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Plan For Today

• Exits & Restrooms
• Handout
  • References
  • Power Point
• Questions
• Publications for Sale
• Gold Country Herb Society
Definition

Any plant whose leaves, flowers, roots are used for flavor, fragrance, medicines, cosmetics or dyes.

Herbs are a human experience involving sight, touch, smell & taste.
Herb vs. Spice

• Spice
  – A hard part of the plant such as roots, bark or seeds

• Herbs
  – The softer parts of the plant including the stems, leaves, flowers
Coriandrum sativum
Coriandrum sativum

- The Herb or herbaceous stage of the plant is Cilantro
- The Spice we know as coriander is the seed.
- Day length, sunlight and temperature influence flowering and seed setting.
- Daylight longer than 12 hours will cause cilantro to bolt. Dill also.
THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Kieffer Lime (*Citrus hystrix*)
Latin Names Matter

• Common Name vs. Latin name (or Botanical or Scientific)
• Remember, these are plants you’re using for food – be sure you have the correct plant.
• Expect nurseries to put the botanical name on the tag.
Corriandrum sativum – Coriander/Cilantro

• Vietnamese Coriander, *Persicaria odorata*
  
  Herbaceous perennial, spreads via root system, invasive in mild-winter areas. Leaves have cilantro flavor.

• Mexican Coriander, *Eryngium foetidum*
  
  Biennial herb grown as warm-season annual. To 16” tall, spiny. Cilantro flavored leaves.

Not considered GRAS.
Why Grow Culinary Herbs

• Quality
• Healthy way to add flavor to food
• Fresh herbs always available
• Save money
• Exotic varieties
• Herbs are excellent pollinators
• They’re beautiful
• Relieve stress
Herbs that attract Pollinators

Butterflies – Chives, thyme, marjoram, mint, parsley

Bees – Basil, lemon balm, lavender, sage, savory, rosemary, dill, thyme, chives, fennel, mint

Hummers – Lavender, sage, mint, rosemary
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HERB GARDEN SITES
Location

- 4 - 6 hours sun
- Well drained soil
- Freedom from woody plant roots & erosion
- Access to water
- Convenient for regular visits
Paths

photos from *The Complete Book of Herbs* *The Complete Book of Herbs and Spices,*
Pots . . .
Tubs

photo from The Book of Herbs
Containers

Container size is important

illustration from The Herb Garden
Companion Plantings

photo from *The Herb Gardener*
Bench

photo from *The Book of Herbs*
Rock Garden

photo from *The Book of Herbs*
PLANTING
Soil Composition

- Well drained
- Add organic matter
- Raised beds
- MULCH!!

Illustration from The Herb Garden
MAINTENANCE
Irrigation

• Many herbs are drought tolerant
• Deep, infrequent watering
• Annuals may require more water (especially if in pots)
• Types of irrigation
  - Best - Soaker hoses & Drip irrigation
  - Not recommended - Overhead sprinklers & hand watering
Fertilizer

• Balanced fertilizer in spring
  – N : nitrogen
  – P : phosphorus
  – K : potassium
  – Compost & fish emulsion make good fertilizers

• Think lightly, half strength

• Annual herbs
Pruning

Spring
Deadheading
Pinching

• Remove flower buds
• Cut back top growth
• Important for culinary herbs – promotes bushy growth & prevents plant from going to seed

[Image: Illustration from The Herb Garden]
Pests and Diseases

- Provide good air circulation
- Provide well drained soil
- Fertilize sparingly
- Herbs that repel pests:
  - Sage, Rosemary, Lavender,
  Basil, Garlic and Mint
PROPAGATING HERBS

• Seeds
• Cuttings
• Layering
• Division
SEEDS

• Start indoors or outdoors after last frost
• Use sterile, lightweight soil
• Follow directions on seed packet
• Water gently & keep moist but not wet
• Provide good air circulation
• Best for annuals, like basil, dill, cilantro & parsley
Cuttings

Root cuttings

Stem cuttings

illustrations from *The Herb Gardener*
Stem Cuttings

• Best for shrubby herbs: Lavender, Geraniums, Sage, Rosemary

• Make a slanted cut, remove bottom leaves, dip in rooting hormone (optional), plant in moist, fast draining potting mix, cover
Layering

illustrations from The Herb Gardener
Layering

- Many plants self layer – mints, oregano, rosemary, thyme, savory & lavender
- Dig hole or use pot
- Fasten stem over hole
- Fill hole with soil and keep damp
Dividing

illustrations from *The Herb Gardener*
Dividing

- When: Early spring for fall blooming plants or fall for spring blooming plants
- Dig out root ball and soil
- Use knife, shovel, trowel to split off healthy sections.
- Good for chives, oregano, tarragon, sorrel
HARVESTING & PRESERVING
When & How Much

- In the morning
- Throughout the season
- When flower buds appear
Washing Herbs

- Spray
- Swish in cold water
Drying Herbs

- Remove discolored leaves
- Make small bundles
- Hang upside down
- Warm, airy, dry location
- Away from direct sunlight
- Good air circulation

illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Good

Keep drying area free of dust. Done when “crispy” dryness.

Not So Good

Illustrations from The Herb Garden & The World of Herbs & Spices
Drying Seeds

Hang upside down in a paper bag.
Other Drying Methods

- Dehydrator
- Drying pantry
Storage

• Package whole leaves if possible
• Use airtight containers
• Store away from direct sunlight, heat and humidity
• If any moisture is detected after placing in storage container, it’s not dry enough.
Freezing Herbs

• For herbs that lose flavor when dried
  - Cilantro, basil, chives
• Freeze whole
• Mince & freeze in water in ice cube tray
• Make into paste & freeze
  – 1/2 c oil/2 c packed herbs
  – i.e. pesto
CULINARY HERBS THAT GROW WELL IN EL DORADO COUNTY
Dill

*Anethum graveolens*

- **Annual**
- **Appearance**
  - Tall, single stem
  - Feathery, thread-like blue-green leaves
  - Flat umbel flower, 6” across
- **Propagate from seed**
- **Uses**
  - Leaves are used in salads and as a garnish for pickles
  - Seeds used as flavoring in cooked veggies

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Cilantro

*Coriandrum sativum*

- **Annual**
- **Appearance**
  - Bright green, finely grooved stems
  - Upper leaves finely divided
- **Propagate:** seeds
- **Uses**
  - Culinary: popular in Asian, Latin and African cooking
    - In shell fish and salads
    - Seeds used in baking and pickling
- **Note:** Will bolt when day light reaches 12 hours
Tarragon

*Artemisia dracunculus*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Linear to lance like, in groups of 3
- Propagate by cuttings, division
  - Seeds may not be “French tarragon”
- Uses
  - Culinary, “French Fines Herbs”
  - Used with fish, in herb butters and mayo, cream sauces and to flavor vinegar
- Note
  - Over-winter mulch
  - Keep soil from getting too wet
Sage

*Salvia officinalis*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Woody shrub with a wide variety of leave size, shapes and colors
- Propagate by cuttings
- Uses
  - Attractive in wreaths and arrangements
  - Primary use is culinary in salads or flavoring for fatty meats; vinegars, butters
  - Dried to discourage insects

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Thyme
*Thymus vulgaris*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Low evergreen shrub
  - Small white/pink flowers
- Propagation by layering
- Uses
  - Mostly culinary as flavoring or garnish
  - Garden ornamental,
- Note
  - Many species, and can range in height from 1” to 1’
Lemon Balm

*Melissa officinalis*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - In clumps to 3’
  - Bright green leaves, deeply veined
- Use
  - Strong lemony scent is a good flavoring
  - Potpourri, sachets
- Note
  - Spreads rapidly
  - Good in pots
  - Prune to keep compact
Mints
*Mentha* spp

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Shrubby to 3 ft
  - Glossy green leaves with small flowers in summer and fall
- Propagate by division when dormant
- Use
  - Culinary as flavoring or oil
  - Decorative ornamental
- Note
  - Very invasive, plant in pots
  - Many varieties

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Bay

*Laurus nobilis*

- Evergreen tree or shrub
- Appearance
  - Tree/shrub, slowly growing to 40 feet in ground
  - Leathery green leaves
- Propagate from cuttings
- Use
  - Leaves as flavoring for soups, stews, sauces
- Note
  - Grows well and for a long time in pots
  - Good for topiary

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Rosemary

*Rosemary officinalis*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Shrub with evergreen, needlelike leaves
  - Blue, lavender, white flowers
  - Upright & prostrate varieties
  - Propagate by layering or cuttings
- Uses
  - Landscape shrub
  - Culinary flavoring, dried or fresh
Lavender
*Lavendula spp.*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - 6” to 4’
  - Green to gray narrow leaves, some fern-like
  - White to deep purple flowers on spikes
- Propagate by layering
- Uses
  - Mostly aromatic, perfumes, potpourri
  - Excellent in fresh & dried arrangements
- Note:
  - Many, many varieties

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Scented Geranium

*Pelargonium geraniaceae*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Varied and interesting leaf patterns
  - Insignificant flowers
- Propagate by stem cuttings
- Uses
  - Culinary in teas, jellies
  - Potpourri
- Note
  - Scent is in the leaves: rose, lemon, peppermint, apple, coconut, nutmeg, etc
  - Frost sensitive
Lemon Verbena
*Aloysia triphylla*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Woody shrub to 5+’ in EDC
  - Deciduous
  - Long pale, green pointed leaves
- Propagate from stem cuttings
- Uses
  - Culinary in tea
  - Lemon flavoring in salad dressings
  - Potpourri
- Note
  - Sensitive to cold, protect in winter

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Calendula

Calendula officinalis

- Annual
- Appearance
  - Erect
  - Many branches
  - Solitary terminal flower, ranging from pale yellow to deep orange
- Propagate - seeds
- Uses
  - Flower petals are used in salads and as garnish

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Winter Savory
*Satureja montana*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Woody compact shrub, 6”-12”
  - Small white or lilac flowers
  - Dark green, lance shaped leaves
- Propagate from cuttings
- Uses
  - Culinary herb for fish and meats
- Note
  - Harvest all winter
  - Summer savory - *Satureja hortensis*

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Sweet Woodruff
*Galium odoratum*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Ground cover, 6” high
  - Green leaves, white flowers in spring
- Uses
  - Potpourri
  - Linen closet freshener
- Note
  - Requires shade
  - Likes application of nitrogen-rich fertilizer

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Parsley

*Petroselinum crispum*

- Biennial
- Appearance
  - Curled to flat green leaves
- Propagate from seed
- Uses
  - Culinary flavoring & decoration;
  - Thought to aid digestion
- Note:
  - Seeds slow to germinate, soak in hot water or freeze overnight; remove flower stalks to extend life in second year.

Illustration from *The Complete Book of Herbs*
Chives

*Allium schoenoprasum/A. tuberoosum*

- Perennial, Appearance
  - Tubular or flat blade-like leaves
  - Purple or white ball-shaped flowers
  - 6” - 2’

- Propagate
  - seeds or division

- Uses:
  - Culinary: flowers for garnish, vinegars
  - Leaves & purple flowers used for dyes

- Note:
  - Chives are excellent ornamental plants
Garlic

*Allium sativum*

- Annual
- Appearance
  - Flat bladelike leaves
  - Purple or white flowers
  - 18” - 2’
- Propagate - cloves
- Uses:
  - Culinary: flowers for garnish, vinegars
- Notes
  - Many cultivars
  - Valuable companion plant
  - Cut off or bend back flower stalks as they form
Oregano/Marjoram
*Origanum vulgare/marjorana*

- Perennial
- Appearance
  - Green, golden colors with pink white, purple flowers
  - 6” - 3’
- Propagate by division or cuttings (hybridize readily)
- Uses
  - Attracts bees & butterflies
  - Overall flavoring
  - Leaves dry well
- Notes
  - Oregano hardier and more flavorful than marjoram
  - Excellent ornamental plants

illustration from *The Book of Herbs*
Basil

*Ocimum basilicum*

- Annual
- **Appearance**
  - 6” - 2’
  - Green, purple leaves
  - White, pink, lavender flowers
- **Propagate from seed or cuttings**
- **Uses**
  - Culinary: pesto, herbal vinegars, overall flavoring
- **Notes**
  - Works well in containers
  - Frost sensitive
  - Many varieties: “Purple,” “Lemon,” “Thai,” etc.