



# Planning Your **MEDICINAL HERB GARDEN**



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Christine J. Dalziel. —1st ed.

# Contents

Introduction:.....	6
Planning Your Herb Garden .....	11
Getting Started .....	13
Container Gardening with Medicinal Herbs .....	17
Making a Pollinator Garden with Medicinal Herbs.....	25
Using Medicinal Herbs in Landscape Design.....	31
Shade Tolerant Medicinal Herbs.....	35
Companion Planting with Medicinal Herbs.....	39
Starting Medicinal Herbs from Seed.....	43
Plant Starts for Medicinal Herbs .....	47
Getting the Most from Your Herb Garden.....	51
Fun Crafts to Make with Herbs .....	57



## Introduction:

Growing medicinal herbs at home has many compelling benefits. Medicinal herbs offer a holistic approach to wellness, allowing you to have more control over your health and wellbeing. Here are 11 reasons I hope you'll consider growing medicinal herbs in your own garden.

### 1. **Self-Sufficiency**

Growing medicinal herbs at home allows you to be more self-sufficient in managing your health. You can cultivate a variety of herbs to address common ailments or support your overall wellbeing.

### 2. **Access to Fresh and Organic Herbs**

Homegrown herbs provide access to fresh and organic sources of medicinal plants. This ensures the purity and quality of the herbs that you use for various health purposes.

### 3. **Cost Savings**

Growing medicinal herbs at home can be a cost-effective alternative to purchasing herbs from medicinal herb suppliers. It also eliminates the need to buy expensive herbal tinctures, salves, soaps, or supplements.

### 4. **Customization of Herbal Remedies**

Home gardeners can customize their herbal remedies based on their personal preferences and health needs. They can experiment with different herb combinations to create personalized blends that work best for them.

## **6. Educational Experience**

Cultivating medicinal herbs at home offers you an educational experience. You can learn about the properties of different herbs, their growth requirements, and how to use them effectively for health benefits.

## **7. Connection with Nature**

Gardening, in general, has positive effects on mental well-being. Growing medicinal herbs allows you to connect with nature, fostering in you a sense of calm and satisfaction.

## **8. Environmental Impact**

Home herb gardens contribute to environmental sustainability. Growing herbs organically reduces reliance on commercial herb production methods that may involve pesticides and other chemicals, as well as long-distance transport.

## **9. Community and Sharing**

As a home gardener, you can share your surplus herbs with friends, family, or neighbors, fostering a sense of community and promoting the use of natural remedies within your community.

## **10. Aesthetics and Landscaping**

Medicinal herbs often have attractive foliage and flowers, enhancing the visual appeal of your garden. Integrating herbs into landscaping adds both beauty and functionality to your outdoor spaces.

## **11. Emergency Preparedness**

Having a home herb garden can be part of an emergency preparedness plan. It ensures you have a readily available source of medicinal herbs, in case of unforeseen circumstances.



Overall, growing medicinal herbs at home offers a holistic approach to health and wellness, combining the benefits of gardening, self-sufficiency, and natural remedies.

In this eBook, we'll focus on growing herbs in a backyard garden. We'll talk about the concerns of vegetable gardeners such as space constraints, companion planting, and adding herbs to a landscape design. This is not a book about growing herbs commercially, though that is certainly possible, it is beyond the scope of this eBook.





# Planning Your Herb Garden

## Your Hardiness Zone

If you plan to grow perennial herbs you need to know your plant hardiness zone. Hardiness zones let you know the minimum temperatures that an herb will thrive in, over the winter. If your area is colder than the minimum temperatures for a specific herb, that herb will struggle to survive in your garden.

While you may go along for a year or two without the winter temperature dropping to record lows, it only takes 30 minutes at that low to kill a shrub or tree. By ensuring that your perennials are hardy enough for your expected low temperatures, you can ensure your herbs and other perennials will survive.

For instance, rosemary is hardy to zone 7. When I lived near Vancouver, British Columbia, in zone 7b, my evergreen rosemary plant thrived and gave me fresh rosemary to cook with or use for herbal remedies, even in winter. But now I live in zone 3. Even with a snow cover, a rosemary plant would struggle to survive the -37C (-34F) we experienced only a couple weeks ago. Lavender, on the other hand, will still be alive when the snow recedes in April. Hidcote lavender is hardy in zone 3.

### Frost-Free Growing Period

Hardiness zone though is only one aspect of planning your medicinal herb garden. It's also important to know your last frost date in spring, and your first frost date in fall. The time between these two dates is your "frost-free growing season". The number of frost free days you have will help you decide on the specific cultivar of herbs to grow. For instance, if you plan to grow an annual herb such as fennel or celery for its seed, you'll need to know how many days it takes the plant to flower and set seed. Then you'll know if you have enough growing time to see the seeds set and mature. This can save you disappointment later.

Knowing the number of frost free days isn't as important with perennial herbs, since they will grow from the ground every spring as soon as the soil temperature and soil moisture is optimal, but for annual herbs it can be helpful.



# Getting Started

The best time to start a medicinal herb garden depends on various factors, including your local climate and the specific herbs you plan to grow. In general, there are a few key considerations:

## **Indoor Seed Starting**

Some herbs, like oregano, sage, and rosemary benefit from an early start indoors. Start herb seeds indoors about eight weeks before the last expected frost date, about the same time you would start tomatoes in your region. Wait until two weeks after your last frost, when the soil has warmed up, to transplant seedlings where you want them to grow. Harden off seedlings, by putting them outside in the shade for a few days, protected from harsh sun, wind, and frost, before transplanting them out to where you want them to grow. Ideally transplant seedlings where you want them to grow, just before you expect it to rain, so that the leaves don't dry out, while the plants are sending down new roots.

## **Spring**

Spring is often considered an ideal time to start a medicinal herb garden. As the weather warms up, it provides a favorable environment for seed germination and early growth. Start seeds in pots or directly in the ground, providing protection against late spring frosts. Once the weather warms up you can put them in their final position.

## **After the Last Frost**

If you don't have access to a sunny window or a greenhouse to protect young seedlings, wait until the last expected frost has passed before planting herbs seeds outdoors. If you have a shorter growing season perennial herbs started directly in the ground after the last frost won't flower in their first year, but they will make a good root ball, giving them a better chance of surviving winter and flowering the following year.

## **Early to Mid-Spring**

In many regions, early to mid-spring is an optimal time for planting medicinal herbs. This allows plants to establish themselves, during the spring rainy season, when temperatures are moderate, before the heat of summer.

As you can see, depending on your regional climate and your personal goals, there is a wide open window to start herbs in the spring, from the time the snow recedes till a few weeks after your last frost date, before the spring rains stop and the hot weather makes seed germination difficult.

## **Fall**

Fall is generally considered the period from your first frost date to your first snow fall. Many regions experience mild weather from their first frost until they experience a hard frost in their area. Hard frost is when the minimum temperature reach  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $28^{\circ}\text{F}$ , and plant growth stops. Tender plants can be damaged if they are exposed to these temperatures, unprotected.

In some climates, especially those with mild winters, fall can be a suitable time to start a medicinal herb garden. Herbs planted in the fall can establish roots before winter and have a head start in the spring. If you plan to get herb garden established in the fall, plant

seeds in pots in late spring, to give the plants time to germinate and get a good root ball before you need to plant them in their final spot.

Some herb seeds need a vernalization period of cold temperatures before they will germinate. These seeds do best when they are planted in the fall in damp soil, in a pot, and left out over winter, exposed to the weather. They will germinate when soil temperatures are optimal. Generally herbs that set seed in the fall such as roses, apples, and some nuts do best when they have a period of cold stratification.

### **Planting bedding plants**

Many herbs are available as bedding plants, though the selection of medicinal herbs will be much smaller than culinary herbs. This can be a good choice if you are slow getting your herb garden started and don't have time to plant seed.

Herb starts are often clones of a single plant, which is rooted at the plant nursery, allowed to grow for a few weeks and then sold to the garden center. When you plant seeds you are getting a wider genetic pool, and some disease resistance in the herb seeds. When you plant clones you have only the disease resistance in a single plant that is usually bred for the nursery trade, and a specific set of environmental circumstance.

Bringing home potted plants might expose your garden to fungal diseases and pest. In 2018 I purchased a dozen fruit and nut trees from a local nursery and planted an infestation of Japanese beetle with the fruit trees. It was a battle to eradicate them from my property, which took 3 years. Another time I purchased a white fly infestation along with some rosemary and basil plants from a local garden center. Now I prefer to start seeds to replenish my herb garden, rather than relying on garden center bedding plants.

## Soil Temperature

Take soil temperature into account. Many herbs prefer soil temperatures between 60°F and 70°F (15°C to 21°C) for optimal germination and growth.

Specific herbs may have different preferences regarding soil temperature, light conditions, and seasonal requirements. Refer to individual herb growing guides or consult with local gardening experts for more precise information based on your chosen herbs and your location. Starting a medicinal herb garden is an exciting and rewarding endeavor, and proper timing can contribute to a successful harvest.





# Container Gardening with Medicinal Herbs

Many medicinal herbs can be successfully grown in containers, making them well-suited for small gardens and cramped spaces. Growing medicinal herbs in containers has several advantages, including flexibility in placement, easy control over soil conditions, and the ability to move the herbs to optimal sunlight or shelter as needed.

If you plan to grow your herbs in containers, be sure to choose a large container that allows for optimal root development. Many herbs, such as rosemary, will do poorly over winter, if the root zone is compromised in the growing season.

Avoid overcrowding herbs within the pot. Herbs need to have good airflow and access to light to thrive. Pots that are overcrowded are more likely to send out distress signals inviting pests to eat them, in order to reduce foliage. Fungal diseases are also harder to control in an overcrowded pot. If you start with seeds, reduce the competition by pinching out seedlings, within the pot, or simply transplant them to another pot, to continue their growth.

Place rocks or gravel in the bottom 1 inch of a pot to allow for optimal root drainage, preventing root rot. Allow the soil surface to dry out between watering. But at the same time, don't neglect the pot so it becomes dust-dry, or the potting medium will have difficulty drawing up water to the root zone.

Here are some medicinal herbs that thrive in container gardens:

### **Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)**

Lavender is well-suited for containers, especially dwarf varieties. Choose a well-draining potting mix, and ensure the container has good drainage. Before you purchase seeds check the hardiness zone for your chosen varieties. There are lavender cultivars for any hardiness zone from zone 3 to zone 10.

Lavender plants repel biting flies and mosquitoes and are a good addition to a balcony or patio arrangement of potted herbs.

### **Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)**

Rosemary is a versatile herb that adapts well to container gardening. Use a large container with well-draining soil. If you live where Rosemary is hardy, zone 8 to 12, you can leave the pot of rosemary outside over winter. In Zone 7 rosemary will need a sheltered spot out of the wind, but can be overwintered outdoors in many areas. In zones 2 to 6, rosemary will need to be brought indoors and protected over winter. It can be a challenge to bring a rosemary plant through the winter indoors, so do keep that in mind if you live where it's cold in winter.

Alternatively, treat it as an annual and purchase a new plant every spring, or root a few cuttings from a friend's plant and plant it outdoors when all danger of frost has passed.

### **Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)**

Thyme is a low-growing herb that works well in containers. It's suitable for culinary and medicinal uses. From the same Mediterranean climate as rosemary it thrives in the same growing conditions with well-drained soil, good air circulation, and full sun. If you have a

damp climate, thyme needs to dry out somewhat between watering, to prevent root rot.

### **Mint (*Mentha* spp.)**

Mint is known for its vigorous growth and spreading root runners. Growing mint in containers is a practical choice to control its spread. Use a large pot to accommodate its growth. Trim it frequently, harvesting the growing tips for tea and herbal medicine.

There are many varieties of mint including chocolate mint, strawberry mint, pear mint and more, all with different hardiness requirements. Chocolate mint smells strongly like peppermint patties and is one of my favorites, hardy to zone 3. Pear mint is hardy to zone 5, and smells like a fresh, sweet pear, with only a hint of menthol. Check the hardiness zone on the mints you are considering for your herb garden to ensure they will thrive in your growing conditions.

### **Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)**

The medicinal chamomile is an annual plant that easily grows in containers. The seeds need light to germinate so prepare the container, and then lightly sprinkle the dust-fine seeds on top of the soil. Water them well and keep the soil surface evenly moist while the seeds germinate.

You'll get several harvests of chamomile flower heads during the growing season beginning about 50 days after sowing. The harvest will continue until you get a hard frost in your area. Keep the container well watered, but allow the surface to dry between watering to prevent fungal diseases.

### **Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*; *Ocimum tenuiflorum*)**

Basil is another easy to grow medicinal and culinary herb that is well-suited for container gardening. Choose a sunny spot and use a well-draining potting mix. Another annual herb, basil is grown for its leaves. Trim the plant often to encourage bushy growth and prevent flowering. Once the plant flowers, the leafy growth will stop as the plant completes its life cycle.

There are many types of basil to choose from, including Holy Basil (*O. tenuiflorum*) which is treated as an annual in most temperate gardens but is a perennial herb in its native India. Other basil types include Genovese basil, the kind found in the grocery store, as well as Thai basil, opal basil, cinnamon basil, and many others. These basil types are often used in cooking and have strong camphor-mint fragrance and rich sweet-basil flavor. Both sweet basil and holy basil can be used in herbal medicine and they have similar properties when used medicinally.

### **Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

Brush pasts lemon balm in the garden and a sweet camphor-lemon scent rises to greet you. Lemon balm is reputed to keep mosquitoes at bay and is an excellent choice for a balcony container garden, when humans might be sitting out enjoying an iced tea, in the evening. Lemon Balm, a mint-family perennial adapts well to containers. It's a versatile herb with a lemony fragrance and calming, antiviral, and pain relieving properties. Add it to chamomile and peppermint for a relaxing, sleep inducing bedtime tea, which eases nervous tension and helps to calm the mind before bed.

### **Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**

Sunny calendula flowers are produced on an annual plant that is easy to grow in containers. The plants grow about 3 feet tall so allow

room for it in your group of containers. The flowers are harvested as they open. Each flower opens for one day and then closes and produces seed, giving you a long harvest of individual flowers to harvest for herbal medicine. Calendula is antifungal, antiviral, and an alterative herb that promotes skin healing. Use a pot with good drainage and keep it well-watered to promote good growth. If the pot has enough nutrients, calendula will continue to bloom until it has a hard frost.

### **Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)**

Oregano is a perennial that is hardy to zone 5 but can overwinter in zone 4 if it is given protection. Greek oregano has the best flavor and the most medicinal aromatics. Like other mint family plants the seeds require light to germinate, so the tiny seeds should be sown on the surface of prepared soil and lightly watered in. Grow in full to partial sun and ensure that the container has good drainage. Allow the soil surface to dry between watering, for optimal results.

### **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)**

Sage, with its silvery leaves, and showy flowers, adds ornamental value to container gardens. It is hardy to zone 4 and will overwinter, with some protection from drying winds. Sage requires well-draining soil and doesn't like its feet to be wet. The leaves are the medicine. Sage tea has digestive benefits as well as benefits for concentration and memory.

### **Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)**

Parsley is an easy to grow biennial herb, which is treated as an annual herb for herbal medicine. The leaves are also used in cooking and can be a useful digestive. However, the plant is also helpful for breaking up gall stones and kidney stones. It has an affinity for the kidneys and has some diuretic properties, helpful as a kidney tonic.

It requires cooler soil temperatures to germinate than many other herbs. Sow parsley about the time you would plant lettuce in your area. Sow the seeds shallowly on the surface of the prepared pot. Cover lightly with a sprinkle of dirt. Keep the soil surface evenly moist, but don't allow the roots to stand in water.

Harvest parsley leaves any time after the plant reaches 8 inches tall. At the end of the growing season, harvest the root for medicine.

When growing medicinal herbs in containers, consider the following tips:

- Use a high-quality potting mix with good drainage. Add well-rotted compost to the containers to ensure adequate nutrition to the growing plants. Generally medicinal herbs don't require high levels of nitrogen, but a well-balanced soil is beneficial to ensure that the plant roots have access to the nutrition they need to promote optimal growth.
- Ensure containers have drainage holes to prevent waterlogged soil. Many medicinal herbs come from regions where the soil is rocky and the sea air is moist. It's difficult to mimic these conditions in our gardens, so a little attention to good drainage at the beginning can prevent failure.
- Place the containers in locations that receive adequate sunlight for the specific herbs. Most herbs that flower, such as chamomile and calendula need full sun to promote good

growth. Herbs where we predominantly use the leaves such as basil, and mint, can make adequate growth in partial sun conditions.

- Water the herbs consistently, allowing the soil to dry out slightly between watering. You can test the depth of the soil moisture by inserting a finger into the soil, on the surface of the pot. If you feel moisture within two inches of the top of the soil surface you can wait to water. If the soil surface is dry 2 inches down, it's time to water the container.
- Containers can dry out in the heat of summer. Pay attention to the condition of the soil and water once or twice a day if needed. Mulching the top of the containers with straw or wood chip, once the plants are established, can prevent a crust forming on the soil surface that inhibits water from permeating the soil in the pot.
- Fertilize container herbs periodically with a balanced organic fertilizer. Growth will naturally slow down for many herbs if the ambient temperatures are in excess of 80°F, if you see growth slowdown during the growing season, when daytime temperatures are staying around 60°F to 70°F, your container plants may need to be fed. Use a 4-4-4 organic fertilizer for best results – a blend of equal parts of fish bone meal, blood meal, and kelp meal can be sprinkled on the soil surface, under the mulch and watered in, to provide a boost.
- Choose appropriately sized containers to accommodate the growth habits of each herb. If you are growing where it is hot and dry, using larger containers means you won't have to water as much. Smaller containers need to be watered more frequently. I like to allow at least 1 gallon pots for smaller herbs and up to 20 gallon pots for larger herbs. In larger pots

you can place up to 4 herbs allowing them to grow along-side each other.

Container gardening allows you to cultivate medicinal herbs in limited spaces, on balconies, patios, or windowsills, providing accessibility and convenience for herb enthusiasts. To make the most of a small space utilize vertical spaces, as well as horizontal space to make an aesthetic grouping of containers that optimizes available light and airflow.





# Making a Pollinator Garden with Medicinal Herbs

Many medicinal herbs are not only beneficial for human health but also attractive to honeybees, native bees, butterflies, and other pollinating insects. They support pollination and the overall health of your garden ecosystem. Supporting both honeybees and native pollinators ensures that your garden and fruit trees will produce to their full potential.

Pollinators will self-medicate on medicinal herbs taking their pollen and nectar back to the colony to ensure hive health and nutrition. Growing a wide variety of flowering plants and medicinal herbs can ensure both the health of the pollinators and the best pollination in your garden.

Here are some medicinal herbs that honeybees and other pollinators are attracted to:

## **Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)**

Lavender produces fragrant flowers that are highly attractive to bees. It's a versatile herb with various health benefits. Lavender has known antifungal and antimicrobial properties.

### **Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)**

Rosemary is another mint family perennial with known antifungal and antimicrobial properties. Rosemary's small, blue flowers are appealing to honeybees and other pollinators. It's an aromatic herb used in both culinary and medicinal applications.

### **Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)**

Thyme contains thymol, an aromatic oil that repels varroa mites. Honeybees will cover themselves with the pollen and nectar of thyme flowers and take both back to the hive. Thyme produces small flowers that attract bees. It's a versatile herb with culinary and medicinal uses. Another mint family plant, thyme is antifungal, antiviral, and antimicrobial.

### **Borage (*Borago officinalis*)**

Borage is known for its star-shaped blue flowers, which are rich in nectar. The flowers are a good source of food for pollinators, since the flowers refill with nectar when they are emptied, a literal nectar fountain.

Be aware that borage will spread throughout the garden from just a few plants, though it is easy to remove it from areas of the garden that you don't want it. Do be vigilant. It can easily overshadow shorter plants, shading them from the sun. It's used both as a culinary herb and for its potential medicinal properties.

Borage is from the same plant family as comfrey and has similar medicinal benefits, aiding cell proliferation and healing when used topically.

### **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)**

Another mint family plant, sage produces spikes of flowers that are attractive to bees and butterflies. The leaves are drying and cooling and useful for colds and flu, as well as aiding the digestion of fats. The aromatic flowers are frequented by pollinators, especially butterflies. It's used in cooking and traditional medicine. Sage is a short lived perennial, so scatter the seeds in the fall, after the flowers dry down, to ensure a perpetual supply of plants.

### **Peppermint and Spearmint (*Mentha* spp.)**

Peppermint and spearmint are delicious for tea and known to provide support for indigestion, menstrual cramps, and upper respiratory congestion. The menthol in mint aids the digestion of fats, and relaxes the stomach, easing gas and stomach pain. The tiny flowers provide nectar for both butterflies and bees, and are a favorite of bumble bees.

### **Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)**

An annual, chamomile is covered in many daisy-like flowers that bees find appealing. When the flowers are harvested, more flowers take their place. Each flower is actually a compound flower with many nectaries, providing lots of nectar for pollinators over the long season. Chamomile is commonly used in teas and herbal remedies to relieve pain, support indigestion, and promote relaxation and sleep.

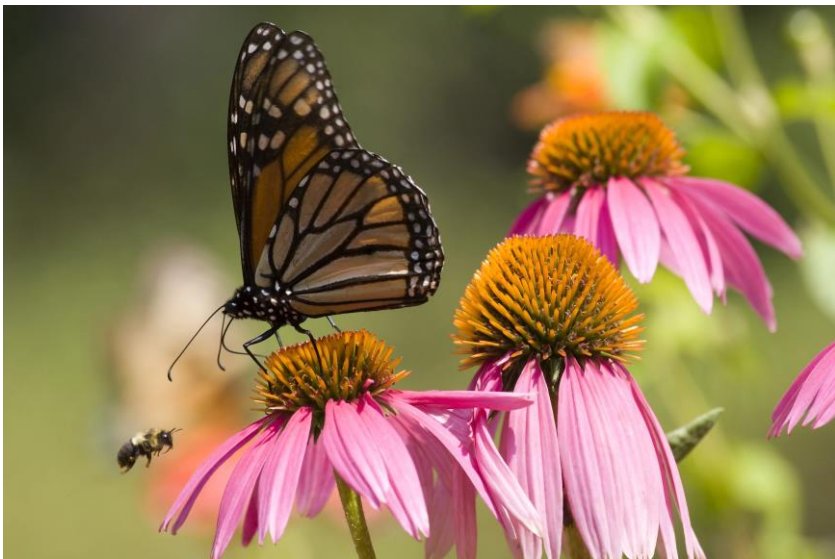
### **Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*)**

Echinacea produces daisy-like flowers with cone-shaped centers that attract bees and butterflies. The flowers are compound flowers with many nectaries in each flower, providing pollinator food over a long season. It's well-known for its immune-boosting properties. The

flower heads, leaves, and root, of this perennial plant, are all used for herbal medicine.

### **Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)**

Another mint family plant, catnip produces clusters of small flowers that are rich in nectar. It flowers later in the season and then continues flowering until the hard frost, giving bees and other pollinators a rich source of carbohydrates to stock up for winter. It's also known for its tranquilizing effects on cats. It's a safe herb for babies and the elderly, with its calming effects that also help with colic, nervous tension, and crankiness. When a child is over tired and "beside himself", catnip can ease the tension and help bring calm, sleep.



**Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**

Calendula, or pot marigold, produces vibrant orange or yellow flowers that bees find appealing. A compound flower, in the same family as chamomile and echinacea, it has many nectaries in each flower. If the flower heads are kept picked, the plants will continue to produce fresh flowers till a hard frost kills the plants. Calendula is known for its skin healing and anti-inflammatory properties. It is also antiviral and a good lymph mover to support immunity. The flowers are the medicine.

**Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)**

Fennel produces umbrella-like clusters of tiny yellow flowers that attract pollinators and provide a large amount of nectar. Umbel flowers are beneficial companion plants because they attract predatory wasps, which lay their eggs on the backs of caterpillars. Other umbel plants include all carrot family plants including dill and parsley. Another annual plant, it's used both as a culinary herb and in traditional medicine for digestive support. Fennel seed is a key ingredient in "Gripe Water" sold over the counter for colic pain in infants.

**Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

A mint family, perennial plant that is rich in essential oils, lemon balm produces small white flowers that are rich in nectar. It's known for its calming properties and is used in teas and herbal remedies. Lemon balm also has antifungal, antiviral, and antimicrobial properties, making it useful in your herbal apothecary.

Lemon balm has a special relationship with honeybees. Historically lemon balm was planted in the apiary to discourage bee swarming and to lure swarming bees, looking for a new home. Lemon balm calms honey bees, making them easier to work with as well.

When planning your herb garden, consider incorporating a variety of these bee-friendly medicinal herbs to support pollinators and encourage biodiversity, over the long growing season. Bees and butterflies play a crucial role in pollination, benefiting both the garden ecosystem and the surrounding environment. Additionally, planting a wide variety of herbs ensures a diverse range of flavors and potential health benefits for humans.



# Using Medicinal Herbs in Landscape Design

Many medicinal herbs are not only beneficial for health but also suitable for landscape design due to their attractive foliage, flowers, and aromatic qualities. If you don't have a lot of room for a traditional backyard garden, adding medicinal herbs to your landscape design can give you the medicinal herbs you desire and keep you under the radar of your Home Owners Association garden-gestapo.

Here are some medicinal herbs that can add both beauty and functionality to your landscape:

## **Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)**

Lavender has lovely grey-green foliage and spikey flower stalks. It can be used as a low hedge, in borders, and in rock gardens. Known for its fragrant flowers and calming properties, there are lavender varieties that are shorter like Hidcote and Munstead, and there are lavender varieties with long stems that are ideal for low hedges.

## **Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)**

Aromatic and evergreen, rosemary is a versatile herb that can be used as a shrub, hedge, or ground cover. It has needle-like leaves and blue flowers. In Mediterranean climates, rosemary hedges are common with their purple and blue flowers, framed by dark green foliage. A bonus, the aromatic oils in rosemary repel biting insects.

### **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)**

Sage is an attractive herb with gray-green leaves and spikes of blue to purple flowers. It works well in low borders and rock gardens, and is drought-tolerant. Ornamental cultivars have variegated leaves, and also have the aromatic scent rich in essential oils, that common sage is known for.

### **Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)**

Thyme is a low-growing herb with small, fragrant leaves. It is often used as a ground cover in pathways or between stepping stones. Thyme offers up a fragrant burst of scent when stepped on. There are several cultivars with scents ranging from orange and lemon to spicy oregano. Lemon thyme is thought to repel mosquitoes and keep them from breeding in your lawn. It's also delicious in rich, meaty stews, helping with digestion of fatty foods.

### **Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)**

Oregano has attractive green foliage and small white to pink flowers. It can be used as a ground cover, in rock gardens, in borders, or in herb gardens. Rich in aromatic essential oils, it offers scent, and foliage to the garden. Oregano is drought resistant once it is established.

### **Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)**

An annual with pretty, daisy like flowers, and an apple scent, Chamomile is a good border plant. It's grey green foliage makes it welcome in the moon garden, a garden that show cases white flowers, and flowers that remain open at dusk and dawn.



### **Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**

A consistent bloomer, calendula, also known as pot marigold, has vibrant orange or yellow flowers. It adds color to gardens and can be used in borders or containers. It makes a lovely fall display along with sunflowers, chrysanthemums and flowering kale in the fall garden.

### **Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)**

Feverfew has clusters of daisy-like flowers and fern-like foliage. It can be used in cottage gardens or as an ornamental border plant.

The flower heads and leaves are used for headache relief, fever, and migraines.

### **Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.)**

One of my personal favorite herbs, bee balm produces showy flowers in various colors and attracts pollinators. It's suitable for perennial borders and cottage gardens with its 3 foot tall flower spikes that bloom from midsummer until fall. Drought resistant once established it is attractive to butterflies, hummingbirds, bumblebees, and native pollinators.

Medicinally it contains both thymol and linalool and can be used interchangeably with thyme and oregano, with antifungal, antiviral, and antimicrobial qualities.

### **Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)**

Yarrow has feathery foliage and flat-topped clusters of flowers. It works well in wildflower gardens, cottage gardens, and rock gardens. Interplant this perennial with shrubs for ground cover. With its umbel flowers it is attractive to hover flies, predatory wasps, bumble bees and butterflies.

Yarrow cultivars come in shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, and white. Medicinally, the colored varieties can be used interchangeably with the native white and pink yarrow. Yarrow is a wound herb that staunches bleeding and relieves bruising, speeding the healing of wounds.

### **Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)**

Catnip has attractive, aromatic foliage and can be used as a ground cover, in a border, or in a cottage garden. It's also known for attracting cats, so keep that in mind, as you place it in the garden.

### **Mint (*Mentha* spp.)**

Mint varieties, with their aromatic leaves, can be used in containers or as ground covers. They spread quickly, so planting in containers can help control growth. If you have an area that seems difficult to cover, mint plants can quickly fill in an area and keep weeds at bay.

When incorporating medicinal herbs into your landscape, consider their growth habits, sunlight preferences, and overall aesthetics. Mixing these herbs with ornamental plants can create a visually appealing and functional garden. Additionally, many of these herbs attract pollinators and beneficial insects, contributing to a healthier garden ecosystem.

# Shade Tolerant Medicinal Herbs

Medicinal herbs where the leaves are the medicine can often be grown in dappled shade or partial sunlight. However, there are several shade-tolerant medicinal herbs that are relatively easy to grow. Many of these are woodland plants and thrive where the ground is damp and cool. Here are a few shade-tolerant medicinal herbs that are generally easy to cultivate. Some of these may be difficult to find plant starts for but the seeds are readily available from medicinal herb seed suppliers.

## **Wood Betony (*Stachys officinalis*)**

Wood Betony is a perennial herb with spikes of purple flowers. It can tolerate partial shade and is known for its historical use in traditional medicine.

## **Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

Lemon Balm is a fragrant herb with lemon-scented leaves. It can tolerate partial shade and is often used for its calming properties.

## **Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)**

Ginger, known for its culinary and medicinal uses, can grow in partial shade. Plant the rhizomes in well-drained soil for best results. Ginger needs a long growing season, so start plants indoors and transplant them out when all danger of frost has passed.

**Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)**

Goldenseal is a slow-growing, woodland herb that thrives in shaded areas. It has antibacterial and antifungal properties due to the berberine alkaloids in the roots. The root is the medicine. Other shade tolerant medicinal plants containing berberine include Oregon grape and barberry.

**Sweet Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)**

Sweet Woodruff is a low-growing herb with fragrant leaves. It can tolerate shade and is often used in herbal teas and potpourri.

**Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)**

Valerian is a perennial herb with fragrant flowers. It can grow in partial shade and is known for its calming, sleep inducing effects. The root is the medicine.





### **Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)**

Comfrey is a hardy herb that can tolerate partial shade. It has medicinal properties and is used topically in herbal remedies to aid cell proliferation in wound healing. The root and leaves are used in medicine. Bocking 14 is a less invasive comfrey cultivar, with sterile seed, which is traditionally used for animal fodder and herbal medicine.

### **Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.)**

Bee balm, while preferring full sun, can tolerate some shade. It has showy flowers and attracts pollinators. In partial shade it grows taller and lankier. The leaves and flowers are the medicine.

### **Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum* spp.):**

Solomon's seal is a woodland herb that thrives in shaded areas. It has arching stems and is known for its ornamental value.

When growing shade-tolerant herbs, it's important to provide well-drained soil and to consider the specific light conditions in your garden. While these herbs can handle shade, they may still benefit from receiving some dappled sunlight or indirect light. Additionally, combining shade-tolerant herbs with other shade-loving ornamental plants can create a visually appealing and diverse garden, border, or rock garden.

# Companion Planting with Medicinal Herbs

Medicinal herbs can be effectively used in companion planting to promote the health and growth of other plants while providing various benefits to the overall garden ecosystem. Companion planting involves strategically placing plants next to each other to enhance their growth, repel pests, and improve overall garden health.

Here are some ways medicinal herbs can be utilized in companion planting:

## **Pest Repellent**

Many medicinal herbs have natural pest-repelling properties. Planting herbs like basil, rosemary, or mint among vegetable crops can help deter pests that may harm the neighboring plants.

## **Attract Beneficial Insects**

Some medicinal herbs, such as dill, fennel, yarrow, or chamomile, can attract beneficial insects like predatory wasps or ladybugs. These insects help control harmful pests in the garden.

## **Complementing Growth Conditions**

Companion planting involves selecting plants that have compatible growth requirements. Herbs that thrive in similar soil and light conditions can be strategically placed among other plants to create an en-

vironment conducive to growth. For instance planting chives with carrots repels carrot rust fly while chives improve the flavor of carrots.

### **Improving Soil Health**

Certain medicinal herbs, like comfrey or yarrow, have deep root systems that can help improve soil structure and nutrient availability. Planting them alongside other crops can contribute to overall soil health.

Yarrow, chamomile, and calendula are known as “nurse” plants. When planted near another plant that is struggling, these plants exude root chemicals that support stressed plants and help them access soil nutrients.

### **Masking Odors**

Strongly scented herbs like chives, garlic, basil or oregano can help mask the scents of neighboring plants, making it harder for pests to locate their target crops. Planting these stronger smelling plants in the root zone of fruit trees can also discourage fruit pests from travelling through an orchard, destroying the crop. You will often see lavender, oregano, and basil plants in commercial orchards to discourage pests.

### **Repelling Nematodes**

Nematodes are soil predators that feed on the roots of plants, ruining the harvest. Herbs like marigold and calendula have been known to repel nematodes, which can be harmful to many vegetable plants. Planting these herbs around susceptible crops can offer protection, while improving the soil life so that nematodes won't recur in subsequent growing seasons.





### **Encouraging Biodiversity**

Incorporating a variety of medicinal herbs in companion planting promotes biodiversity in the garden. This can contribute to a more resilient and balanced ecosystem, both in the soil and in the insect and bird populations.

### **Improving Flavor in Edible Crops**

Some culinary herbs, such as parsley or chives, can enhance the flavor of nearby vegetables. This can result in improved taste and culinary satisfaction.

When implementing companion planting with medicinal herbs, it's essential to consider the specific needs and interactions of each plant. Additionally, observing the behavior of plants and adjusting the arrangement based on the success of companion planting strategies is part of the ongoing learning process in gardening.



# Starting Medicinal Herbs From Seed

Several medicinal herbs are relatively easy to grow from seeds, making them suitable for beginners or those new to herb gardening. However, many medicinal herbs can be difficult to germinate without special treatment.

Seeds have built in intelligence to germinate only when light, soil temperatures, and moisture are correct for their individual needs. Very tiny seeds, such as chamomile, peppermint, lavender, and rosemary require light to aid in germination. We call these seeds, “light dependent germinators”. Other seeds require a period of cool, moist conditions, called “stratification”, in order to germinate. Understanding the specific needs of each seed can support your successful seed starting efforts.

Here are some medicinal herbs that are commonly grown from seeds and are known for their ease of cultivation:

## **Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)**

Chamomile seeds are easy to grow, and chamomile is known for its calming properties. It's commonly used in teas and herbal remedies.

The seeds are light dependent germinators so just sprinkle the seeds lightly on the soil surface. Press in firmly so that the germinating seed have access to the subsoil moisture. Keep well watered from the bottom until the roots are well anchored in the soil. Watering

from the top can dislodge these seeds and bury them, inhibiting germination.

### **Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**

Calendula seeds are easy to germinate, and the plant has vibrant orange or yellow flowers. If you live in an area with long summers, sow calendula in successive planting to ensure a long bloom period. Calendula plants are hardy annuals and can survive light frosts. They may even self-sow, and return year after year in the same spot. Calendula is known for its anti-inflammatory properties.

### **Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)**

While lavender can be grown from seeds, it's often propagated through cuttings. However, some varieties, such as *Lavandula angustifolia*, can be started from seeds with patience. Lavender is a light dependent germinator, so sow the seeds lightly on the soil surface, and press in to ensure good soil contact. Use a heat mat to encourage germination. Lavender seeds can take a few weeks to germinate.

### **Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)**

Basil is an easy-to-grow herb from seeds and is widely used in culinary dishes. The seeds are light dependent germinators so sow lightly on the soil surface, press in, and water from the bottom. It should germinate in a week. Basil is used in culinary dishes and as a medicinal herb.

### **Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*):**

Echinacea seeds are relatively easy to germinate. Plant the seeds in moist soil about 3 weeks before your last frost date. The seeds will germinate as the soil warms up. The plant is well-known for its immune-boosting properties. It produces attractive flowers in shades of

white, pink, purple, and even orange. All cultivars of echinacea can be used for medicine.

**Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)**

Dill seeds are easy to grow. It has a long tap root that can be damaged in transplanting so plant dill seed where you want it to grow. The herb has digestive and antimicrobial properties. It is commonly used in pickles and culinary dishes.

**Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)**

Fennel seeds are easy to germinate, without special treatment. There are two kinds of fennel, one type is grown for its seeds and fronds that have an anise flavor. The other is grown as a vegetable. For medicinal use, you want the kind that is grown predominantly for seed. Both kinds of fennel are easy to grow from seed, but the vegetable fennel should be thinned to 6 inches apart to allow room for the plants to develop to their full potential.

**Cilantro/Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*)**

Cilantro (the leaves) and coriander (the seeds) come from the same plant. The seed is large and easy to germinate without special treatment. Plant cilantro successively in your garden, for an ample supply of both leaves and seeds. The plants will withstand light frost.

**Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)**

Parsley should be planted in spring at the same time you would plant potatoes or peas. The seeds requires cool, moist conditions to germinate. If you plant it indoors, omit the bottom heat, which can impede germination. Parsley root is used to break up kidney stones and gallstone, while the leaves are a kidney tonic and diuretic.

### **Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*)**

Chives, an onion family plant, can be easily grown from seeds. However, the seeds are short lived, so ensure that the seeds are from the current year for best result. No other special treatment is needed.

There are two kinds of chives, common chives and garlic chives. Both provide green leaves to add to culinary dishes offering a mild onion flavor. Common chives have purple to pink flowers that bloom in late spring, while garlic chives offer sprays of white flowers that bloom in last summer. Once you have them established, both types of chives can be divided annually into several clumps to expand your plantings.

### **Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

Lemon Balm seeds are light dependent germinators. Sow the tiny seeds on the soil surface and press in firmly. Offer bottom heat for best results. The seeds should germinate in a 7 to 10 days. Lemon balm has antiviral and antimicrobial properties. It is also calming and helpful for nervous anxiety and insomnia.

When growing herbs from seeds follow the specific sowing and care instructions for each herb. Additionally, provide suitable growing conditions, including well-drained soil, proper sunlight, and consistent watering. Starting with these easy-to-grow medicinal herbs can be a great introduction to herb gardening.



# Plant Starts for Medicinal Herbs

If you find germinating seeds challenging, starting with established plants is a great alternative. Your local nursery will carry some culinary herb plants in the spring. Local growers may have both culinary and medicinal herbs at the farmer's market in spring. Alternatively some medicinal herb seed companies such as Richter's Herbs in Ontario Canada and Strictly Medicinal Seeds in the USA sell herb plants in spring by mail order.

Take into account how far you are from mail order seed companies. Mail order plants travel in the dark and may be stressed when you receive them, if they have to travel for more than 5 days to get to you. Their growing conditions can be quite different from the growing conditions in your garden, and they will require special care for a few weeks until they become established. Plan to transplant them immediately on arrival and protect them from direct sunlight until their roots are acclimatized.

Here are some medicinal herbs that are often best started as plants rather than seeds due to challenging germination or specific growing requirements:

## **Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)**

Lavender can be a bit challenging to grow from seeds, but starting with young plants or cuttings is a more reliable method. Green cuttings will often root in water in just a few days. Use rooting hormone

to get hardwood cuttings started. Once you see top growth, you'll know that the cuttings are rooted. Do not over water. Lavender is known for its aromatic flowers.

### **Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)**

Rosemary seeds can be slow to germinate, and the plant is often propagated through cuttings. Use softwood cuttings, taken before the plant flowers. The cuttings will root in 5 to 7 days in a glass of water, on a sunny window sill. Transplant the rooted cuttings to your growing medium when the roots are 1 inch long. Rosemary doesn't like wet feet, so once the plants are well rooted in their growing medium, water only when the soil surface dries out. Rosemary is an aromatic herb used in culinary and medicinal applications.

### **Mint (*Mentha* spp.)**

Many varieties of mint will not grow true from seed and are usually propagated through root divisions or cuttings. Once you have an established mint cultivar you will be able to divide it annually to spread the mint around your garden. Do be wary of the invasive nature of mint roots and keep the plant roots contained so that you don't have an over-abundance. Mint is a useful digestive herb with antimicrobial, and anti-nausea properties. The leaves are the medicine.

### **Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)**

Thyme is slow to grow in the garden and slow to spread. Starting with established plants can be easier and more rewarding. Some varieties of thyme will not grow true from seed, and for these varieties starting with establish plants is the only way to have them in your garden. Thyme is commonly used in culinary dishes and has antimicrobial, antifungal, and respiratory benefits.



### **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)**

Sage seeds can be slow to germinate, and the plant is often propagated through softwood cuttings. Some special cultivars can only be found as bedding plants, so these won't be found as seeds.

Sage is a flavorful herb used in cooking, that aids the digestion of fats, and is used as a nootropic herb to support memory and concentration.

### **Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)**

Oregano can be grown from seeds, but starting with established plants is a faster way to establish a productive herb garden. Like sage, some cultivars of oregano are only available as bedding plants. Oregano is used in cooking and to support respiratory and immune health.

### **Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*)**

Echinacea seeds can be slow to germinate, and starting with young plants ensures a more reliable start. If you are looking for special colors of echinacea flowers, starting with established plants is important. Many cultivars are only available as bedding plants. Echinacea is known for its immune-boosting properties.

### **Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)**

Valerian is often grown from root divisions or established plants due to challenging seed germination. It's used for its calming effects.

### **Arnica (*Arnica montana*)**

Arnica seeds can be difficult to germinate, requiring stratification. The plant is often propagated through division or started as established plants.

The flower heads are used topically for their anti-inflammatory properties and as a first aid and bruise treatment.

### **Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

While lemon balm may be grown from seeds, the plants are slow growing at first. Starting with young plants is a quicker and more reliable method to get a harvest in the year of planting. From the mint family, lemon balm can be divided in spring and spread around your garden. Lemon balm is known for its lemon-scented leaves and calming properties.

### **Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)**

Feverfew seeds can be challenging to germinate, and the plant is often propagated through softwood cuttings. Take the cuttings before the plant flowers. Root in a glass of water and plant out when the stems have 1 inch roots. This only takes a week or two. Feverfew is used in traditional medicine for headache and migraines.

When starting with established plants, ensure that they are healthy and free from diseases. Check the plants for insect infestation. If you see white flies or moths flying around the nursery, buy elsewhere. Purchase plants from reputable nurseries, or obtain them from experienced gardeners. This approach allows you to enjoy the benefits of medicinal herbs without the initial challenges of seed germination.



# Getting the Most From Your Herb Garden

To make the most of the harvest when growing medicinal herbs at home, there are a few steps you can take to ensure that the herbs that you grow are preserved at their peak of potency.

Here are some tips:

## **Harvest at the Right Time:**

Harvest herbs when they are at their peak potency. When to harvest each herb depends on which part of the herb you will use medicinally. If you are harvesting the green, above ground parts, called the “aerial parts”, harvest the plant just before the plant flowers, as the essential oil content is typically highest at this stage. Many culinary herbs such as chive, oregano, sage, and rosemary are harvested at this stage.

When it is the flowers that are used medicinally, such as with lavender, calendula, or rose, harvest the flowers after they open but before they are pollinated by bees. This ensures that the flower nectar and pollen is intact, and the medicine in the flower is at its peak. The flowers will open over several days. Harvest them in early morning, after the dew has dried, but before the sun evaporates their fragrance.

If the roots are used for medicine, wait till the first light frost before harvesting them. Light frost signals the plant to put its energy into the roots for the coming winter, and increases the plant sugars, to prevent the plant tissue from freezing.

Biennial plants, those plants that flower in their second year and then die, will have their roots harvested in the fall of their first year. Plants like mullein, burdock, parsley, and root fennel are in this class.

Perennial plants, which are harvested for their roots, generally are harvested in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year from planting, or even later. These plants include echinacea, dandelion, bayberry, golden seal, Oregon grape, and ginseng.

### **Use Proper Harvesting Techniques**

When harvesting for medicinal use, it's important to keep everything used in harvesting clean, to avoid transferring plant disease between plants and to ensure that your herbal medicine harvest is pristine. Use clean and sharp gardening shears to avoid damaging the plants. Harvest in the morning when the essential oils are most concentrated, but after the dew has dried. Cut stems just above a leaf node to encourage bushier growth. When handled this way several harvests are possible each growing season.

### **Continual Harvesting**

Perennial herbs can be harvested continually during the growing season by cutting the individual stems just above a leaf node. This encourages the plant to send up two stems where the cut was made, effectively doubling the plant and encouraging more bushy growth.

### **Drying Herbs**

Herbs should be dried quickly at low temperatures to preserve their medicinal properties. One of the easiest ways to dry herbs is to bun-

dle them by the stem and hang them upside down, allowing ample air circulation. Individual flowers may be dried on paper towels in a basket. Turn the flowers several times a day to expose their surface to the air. A dehydrator can be used but the temperature should not exceed 110°F, to preserve the medicinal properties of the plants.

Surprisingly, even herbs that are tightly bundled do not mold if the relative humidity is low and the plants are not over crowded when hung to dry.

### **Storage in Airtight Containers**

Once the herbs are crispy-dry, the leaves should be separated from their stems, and stored in an air tight container. Mason jars are excellent storage containers for herbs, provided that the jars can be stored away from direct sunlight and heat.

Adding an oxygen absorber to each jar and sealing the jar with a vacuum sealer, will preserve the freshness of the herbs for several years. Label containers with the herb name and harvest date.

### **Avoid Moisture**

In many homes the relative humidity fluctuates during the year. It's important that herbs are kept dry to prevent mold and spoilage. Moisture can degrade the quality of dried herbs quickly.

Light also degrades herbs, so when stored in glass jars the herbs should be protected from light. Even room light, over time, will decrease the shelf life of herbs.

Store them in a cool, dark place away from direct sunlight. If necessary, place the individual jars in a paper bag to block light.

## **Labeling**

Label each herb clearly with its name and date of harvest. This helps in identifying herbs and using the oldest ones first to ensure freshness. It's also a good idea to keep a notebook to track where you harvested an herb, especially if you harvest from different gardens or from the wild.

Herbs are natural and are subject to the variations in soil nutrients, weather, and sunlight. Even the timing of the harvest will affect the potency of the herbs.

You may find that herbs in one part of your garden have increased benefits, better flavor, or stronger efficacy, and by keeping good records you will be able to make future choices about where to plant them and when to harvest them.

## **Create Herbal Infusions**

Both fresh and dried herbs can be used for tea, tinctures, and other infusions. Fresh herbs should be wilted at room temperature for a few hours to remove some of the moisture, before they are added to a tincture, glycerite, or oil infusion. Dried herbs can be used without any additional treatment. Making herbal infusions is an enjoyable and practical way to incorporate medicinal herbs into daily routines.

## **Experiment with Recipes**

Experiment with recipes that include medicinal herbs. Use them in cooking, baking, or making herbal remedies. When making herbal teas explore different blends to find what works best for you.

Herbal simples, using a single herb, in a tea, or a remedy can help you get to know an herbal ally better and understand intuitively how the herb makes you feel and how its medicinal qualities interact with your personal needs.

Regular harvesting keeps the stems young and prevents the plants from becoming woody.

### **Learn Herbal Medicine Making Techniques**

Making herbal medicine is as easy as following a recipe. But there are nuances to learn with each herb. Some herbs, such as St. John's wort should be preserved in oil or in alcohol when the flowers are fresh, but wilted. Dried St. John's wort flowers lose their medicinal potency quickly after drying.

Other herbs, like peppermint and lemon balm, will last a long time as a dried herb and preserve their potency for a year or even two.

Explore herbal medicine making techniques such as making herbal tinctures, oils, or salves. These can extend the shelf life of herbs and provide additional ways to use them.

### **Educate Yourself on Uses:**

Enroll in an online herb class or membership to learn about the specific uses and properties of each herb. Understanding how to use them for various health benefits ensures that you get the most from your herb harvest and learn to use herbs safely and effectively in your own home.

If you are on prescription or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, you need to use extra caution when adding medicinal herbs to your lifestyle since herbs can and do interact with pharmaceuticals. Educate yourself so that you can make the best choices in your pursuit of health and well-being.

### **Share with Others**

If you are blessed with an abundance of herbs, share them with friends, family, or neighbors. This fosters a sense of community and

spreads the benefits of homegrown herbs in your neighborhood. In the next chapter we'll look at other ways to share your herbs and spread the joy of holistic wellness.





# Fun Crafts to Make with Herbs

Crafting with medicinal herbs can be a fun and creative way to enjoy the benefits of your homegrown herbs. Here are some craft ideas that incorporate medicinal herbs:

## **Herbal Sachets**

Create sachets filled with dried herbs such as lavender, chamomile, lemongrass, or mint. Place them in drawers, closets, or under pillows for a fragrant and calming effect.

Use a drawstring bag to hold the herbs, or sew small pillows to hold the herbs, using vintage, embroidered handkerchiefs.

## **Herbal Bath Salts**

Mix dried herbs like lavender or calendula with Epsom salts to create soothing herbal bath salts. Package them in decorative jars for personal use or as gifts.

Adding a wooden scoop or a muslin bag to the jar can make portioning the bath salts easier.

## **Herbal Potpourri**

Combine dried herbs and flowers to make an attractive and fragrant herbal potpourri. Add a few drops of essential oils for extra fragrance. Place it in bowls or decorative sachets around the house.

### **Herb-Infused Candles**

Infuse candles with the scent of herbs by placing strongly scented dried herbs in a tea bag, in the wax as it melts. Remove the tea bag with kitchen tongs, before you pour the candles into the molds. Melted wax is hot, so be careful when you remove the teabag. This creates aromatic candles that release light herbal fragrances when burned.

### **Herbal Wreaths**

Make decorative wreaths using dried herbs like lavender, rosemary, thyme, or bay leaves. Grapevine wreaths are easy to make from grape prunings, taken in the fall or early spring, and make a wonderful foundation for herbal wreaths. Bundle the herb stems and anchor them with florist wire to the wreath foundation. Hang them in the kitchen or other living spaces for a pleasant aroma.

### **Herb-Pressed Artwork**

I was given a book once that had four leaf clovers pressed into the pages, by a young friend. It was a wonderful surprise gift.

Herb leaves and flowers can be pressed in the pages of a heavy book or in a dedicated flower press. Once dry the herbs can be used to create botanical artwork, book marks, or greeting cards. They can also be used to decorate handmade paper. Pressed herbs can add a natural and artistic touch to your creations.

### **Herb-Infused Oils**

Make herbal-infused oils by combining dried herbs with carrier oils such as sweet almond oil, rose hip seed oil, or argan oil. Use these oils for massage, skincare, or as a base for homemade salves and balms.

### **Herbal Dream Pillows**

Herbal dream pillows are small pillows that are placed inside your pillow case, under your regular pillow. They are crafted from herbs like mugwort or lavender that are known to increase relaxation or promote vivid dreams.

Herbal dream pillows are easy to make from a vintage handkerchief, or a small, tightly woven, rectangle of cloth, folded into a square, and hand stitched on the three open sides. A dream pillow will use only a small amount of herbs and should be fairly flat when finished so that it doesn't create a lump, under the pillow. The herbs will break down over time, and should be replaced when they are no longer fragrant.

### **Herbal Seed Bombs**

Mix herb seeds with a 50/50 clay and soil mixture to create seed bombs. Add just enough water to the soil and clay mixture that it will hold together. It should not be drippy. Add a few pinches of a variety of herb seeds to the clay mixture and distribute the seeds well throughout the clay-soil medium. Roll the herbal seed bombs into balls the size of a hazelnut. Spread them out to dry thoroughly at room temperature. Turn them frequently until they are dry.

Toss the finished seed balls into your garden or outdoor spaces for a wild herb garden.

### **Herbed Salt**

Combine dried herbs like rosemary, thyme, peppers, or sage with sea salt to create flavorful herbed cooking salts. Herbed salt makes delicious gifts for gourmet cooks. Use them to enhance your culinary creations or give them as gifts. Pay attention to packaging, and your gift of herbed salt can shine.

### **Herbal Tea Blends**

Create custom herbal tea blends by mixing dried herbs, paying attention to both flavor and herbal benefits. The rule of thumb for crafting herbal tea blends is to use 1 main herb for its herbal benefits, 1 secondary herb for its supportive benefits, and 1 herb in half the amount for synergy and flavor. An example would be using 1 part chamomile, 1 part spearmint, and ½ part lemon balm in an herbal tea blend to support relaxation and sleep.

Package your herbal tea blends in decorative containers and share them as gifts.

### **Herb-Infused Honey**

Infuse honey with dried herbs like rose, sage, or rosemary. Allow the herb infused honey to macerate for up to 30 days before straining. Use the infused honey in cooking, as a sweetener for tea, or for colds and sore throat. Honey is naturally antimicrobial and soothing for dry throat and coughs.

These craft ideas not only provide a creative outlet but also allow you to enjoy the aromas and benefits of medicinal herbs in different ways. They make excellent gifts and add a personal touch to your living spaces.



## IS THE **HERB OF THE MONTH CLUB** YOUR NEXT STEP TO HERBAL MEDICINE MASTERY

Herbal wisdom doesn't end when you harvest your precious medicinal herbs from the garden. In fact, that is just the beginning to a life-long journey of getting to know your herbal allies better.

At Joybilee we are committed to helping YOU gain herbal medicine mastery through both education and hands-on experience with your herbal allies. We do this through our blog posts, our online courses, our eBooks, and two dedicated memberships.



Joybilee's Herb of the Month Club is a monthly membership for herbalists and healers at any level and with any skill set. We focus on one medicinal herb each month to give you the opportunity to get to know this plant with its nuances intuitively. The focus is on hands-on involvement with the herb, to gain a growing confidence built on

knowledge, so that you learn to trust your herbal allies when you need them most.

Whether you are a beginning herbalist, or an experienced herbalist wanting to refresh your memory and skills, there are things to learn about each herbal ally and ways to make learning instinctual.

The month is split into thirty days, with just one assignment each day to help you familiarize yourself with the herb. The assignment will take you about 10 to 15 minutes. There are implementation days along the way so no one falls behind. Each day builds upon previous days to help you build confidence in your new herbal ally, so you learn to trust its herbal actions and how you personally interact with it.

We include opportunities to study and research more on the herb, once you feel familiar with it. As you progress through the monthly guide you also find recipes and projects to help you use each monthly herb both in the kitchen and in the apothecary, as appropriate to each herbal ally. Don't think of it as an exhaustive guide though. Use this as the jumping off point for a life-long relationship with your herbal allies.

[\*\*LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HERB OF THE MONTH CLUB HERE\*\*](#)



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris helps natural moms create a homegrown lifestyle so they can create health and wellness for their families naturally. She is a teacher, author, gardener, and herbalist with 40+ years' of growing herbs and formulating herbal remedies, skin care products, soaps, and candles.

Chris is the founder of the [DIY Herbal Fellowship](#), [the DIY Herb of the Month Club](#), the Joybilee Farm blog, and an instructor at [Joybilee Academy](#). Chris believes in giving her readers a quick win because each quick win builds confidence and empowers intuition for self-reliance and natural health.

Chris is the author of the *Dehydrator Cookbook for Beginners, A Guide to Dehydrating Fruits, Vegetables, Meats, and More* (2022), *The Beeswax Workshop, How to Make Your Own Natural Candles, Cosmetics, Cleaners, Soaps, Healing Balms and More* (2017), *Homegrown Healing, from Seed to Apothecary* (2016), and *The Beginner's Book of Essential Oils, Learning to Use Your First 10 Essential Oils with Confidence* (2015)