

# Spice

up your garden  
with easy-to-grow herbs



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**Q**uestion: I would like learn more about herbs and where to grow them if I don't have space for a vegetable garden.

**A**nsWER: Herbs make a wonderful addition to any garden and can be grown successfully just about anywhere, even in pots on balconies; they are very versatile. But what are herbs? These plants are known for having non-woody stems, as having soft stems or being "herbaceous" and typically live long enough to produce flowers, and often seeds. They are known for their savory or aromatic properties.

Herbs include annuals (grow only one season), such as basil, anise, chervil and coriander; biennials (grow for two seasons, with blooms in the second season), such as caraway and parsley; and perennials (live for a number of years and bloom each year), such as chives, fennel, marjoram, rosemary, lavender and thyme.

In addition to being fairly easy to grow, herbs also have many positive attributes:

- Most grow easily from seeds; others grow easier from cuttings, or by dividing—can be grown from starts indoors, and some can overwinter indoors in a sunny window.

- Do not need really fertile soil, and most need little to no fertilizer; too much fertilizer will produce an abundance of foliage with little flavor.

- Have few insect or disease pests, and some herbs are even used as pest management in the



Chive blossoms, above, are considered perennials, meaning they continue blooming each year and can live for a number of years consecutively. Basil (left) and thyme are two types of edible herbs.

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garden, such as garlic. Small, soft-bodied pests can be treated by washing off with water or insecticidal soaps.

- Prefer well-drained soil, and most enjoy full sun, but some need a little shade in the peak heat of summer.

- Provide beneficial flowers for bees.

- Produce edible flowers—chives, lavender, sage, calendula, thyme, viola, nasturtiums, as well as many others.

- Some qualify as WaterWise plants—sage, rosemary and thyme.

WaterWise Gardening is a style of gardening that uses little or no water (Oregon WaterWise Gardening is a statewide program of Oregon State University Extension, <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/watershed/waterwise-gardening>).

Herbs are grown around the world and valued for these common purposes—culinary (adding flavor to food and teas), aromatic (creating perfumes, potpourri), medicinal and ornamental uses (fresh or dried arrangements). Typically, the leafy green or flowering parts of the plant are used, either fresh or dried. A sampling of common herbs by use is below:

**Culinary:** Basil (sweet and Thai), thyme, rosemary, sage, mint (peppermint and spearmint), dill, oregano, parsley (curly and Italian), anise, savory.

**Aromatic:** Lavender, marjoram, rosemary, mint, basil, lemon verbena, bee balm, catnip (for

our feline friends).

**Medicinal:** Used since ancient times; before using, you may want to consult your health care professional.

**Ornamental:** Lavender, rosemary, thyme, mint, germander.

Now that we know why we enjoy having herbs in our world, we want to incorporate them into the garden. Since herbs are so versatile, let your imagination run wild in determining containers and placement in the garden. If space is very limited, using pots is a great option.

Consider clustering a variety in one pot, or use a strawberry pot, placing a different herb in each opening, or use a hanging basket. Pots of aromatic herbs are nice

to place along walkways or outside doorways so their fragrances can be enjoyed, such as lavender, rosemary or mint. If you're looking to add mint to your herbal mix, you will want to plant it in a pot, as it spreads easily and can quickly take over.

If you have space in your yard, think beyond the pot and incorporate herbs in your landscape beds. Herbs mix well with woody perennials and ornamental grasses. There are many terrific options. Some to consider are lamb's ear (silver foliage), sage (variegated leaf), lavender and rosemary (purple flowers) or santolina (yellow flowers).

Herbs also make nice accent plants around focal points, such as a

fountain, garden sculpture or large ornamental pot. If you are looking for a ground cover, creeping thyme works well, even between pavers on walking paths. As you can see, there are a wide variety of herbs for many uses, and many options for incorporating them into our gardens.

*Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-236-3052 or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*