



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
Agriculture & Natural Resources

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HERBS IN THE GARDEN

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Simply put, an herb is a useful plant. Herbs are used in cooking, as teas, medicines, cosmetics, aromatherapy and crafts. Herbs can be planted in a bed or incorporated into the landscape with other ornamental plants. Many of the herbs that perform well in our climate are native to the Mediterranean area. These plants prefer sun and well-drained soil and can tolerate low water. Lavender, rosemary, sage, catnip, oregano, thyme, and hyssop are some examples. There are herbs that are suitable for every exposure. Mints, for example, prefer part shade. It is important to consider your planting site carefully and group plants with like requirements together. Generally, harvesting of a particular herb should be done when the “virtue” of the plant is at its peak. Plants chosen for harvest should be free from disease and pesticide free. The various parts of the plant (root, leaf, blossom, etc.) should be gathered when the active constituents are most abundant. The time of day best for harvesting is in morning after the dew has dried and before the temperature gets too hot. Leaves should be young, fresh, and vibrant looking. Fresh plant material should be processed as soon after harvesting as possible.

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DESCRIPTION	GROWING REQUIREMENTS
Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Annual; bushy to 2 ft tall green, shiny, rounded leaves with spikes of white flowers; varieties with purple leaves and pink flowers	Full sun, regular water, heat loving; plant seedlings outdoors when night time temp is consistently above 50-55°F.
Bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Aromatic shrub or tree; leathery oblong green leaves	Full sun or partial shade; tolerates poor soil; needs good drainage and moderate water.
Calendula/ Pot Marigold	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Annual flowers, large yellow to orange with many petal rays; leaves oblong, pale green	Full sun to partial shade; fairly rich, well watered soil; prefers cool weather.
Catnip	<i>Nepeta cataria</i>	Perennial; gray-green heart shaped coarsely toothed leaves, white flowers	Full sun, light well-drained soil, little to moderate water
Chamomile	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	Low, creeping perennial with feathery leaves and daisy-like flowers.	Full sun to part shade, well-drained soil, moderate water
Cramp Bark	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Deciduous shrub (“cranberry bush”); spreading branches; dark green maple-like leaves red in fall; white flower clusters in May followed by red berries.	Sun or part shade; does well in heavy, rich moist soil, regular water.
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>	Annual, soft, feathery leaves; umbrella-like clusters of small yellow flowers, pungent fragrance	Full sun, moderate rich soil, infrequent water
Echinacea	<i>Echinacea augustifolia & purpurea</i>	‘Purple coneflower’; composite flower head with drooping purple rays; leaves ovate, pointed, coarsely toothed	Full sun to light shade, fertile well drained soil, moderate water
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Deciduous scrub tree 5-12 ft; tiny white flowers in large clusters; purple-black berries in Sept & Oct	Sun or light shade, moderate water
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Perennial, 3-5 ft, feathery, dill-like foliage; flat clusters of yellow flowers; bronze varieties	Full sun, fairly rich soil, moderate water
Feverfew	<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>	Perennial compact with light green deeply lobed leaves, daisy like flowers	Full sun or light shade, average well drained soil, regular water
Garlic	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Compound bulb with 4-15 cloves	Full sun to part shade, rich deeply cultivated soil; keep somewhat dry

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COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DESCRIPTION	GROWING REQUIREMENTS
Ginkgo	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Graceful slow growing tree with green fan shape leaves which turn golden yellow in fall; can grow up to 70-80 ft.; male tree preferred (females produce messy, ill-smelling fruit); can tolerate air pollution, heat, acid & alkaline conditions.	Full sun, average, well drained soil, regular water until tree reaches 20 ft; then can tolerate occasional irrigation.
Hawthorne	<i>Crataegus</i> sp.	Dense tree grows up to 25 ft; known for clusters of white flowers in spring and red berries in fall; attracts birds and bees	Full sun to part shade; tolerates most well drained soil, moderate water
Horse radish	<i>Armoracia rusticana</i>	Perennial with large oblong, lobed or toothed leaves, flowers small white, long white tapering root	Full sun rich moist, heavy soil
Hyssop	<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	Compact bush with grayish leaves; flowers in blue whorls, some varieties white, pink or lavender	Full sun to light shade, well drained soil, moderate to low water
Lambs Ears	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>	Perennial soft, thick, gray, wooly ear-shaped leaves; flower stalks with whorl of small purple flowers	Full sun or light shade; tolerates poor soil, infrequent water
Lavender	<i>Lavendula angustifolia</i>	Perennial bushy shrub with grey-green leaves and lavender flowers clustered on spikes	Full sun, light well-drained soil, little water
Lemon Verbena	<i>Aloysia triphylla</i>	Deciduous aromatic shrub; light-green lance-shaped leaves, small white flowers in spikes	Full sun, well-drained soil, regular water
Lemon Balm	<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Perennial bush; light-green heavily veined leaves with lemon scent	Sun or part shade, rich moist well-drained soil, regular water
Passion Vine	<i>Passiflora incarnata</i>	Perennial vine, leaves 3 to 5 deeply toothed lobes, flowers white of pale lavender with pink/purple calyx	Full sun, fertile well drained soil, moderate water
Peppermint	<i>Mentha piperita</i>	Deciduous, invasive creeping ground cover, toothed 2" long leaves	Sun or part shade, med-rich, moist soil, regular water
Rose	<i>Rosa</i> spp.	Deciduous or evergreen shrub, flowers with soft rounded petals, leaves in 5 leaflets with rough edges	Sun or light shade, rich well drained soil, regular water
Rosemary	<i>Rosemarinus officinalis</i>	Perennial evergreen shrub with needle-like leaves, blue flowers	Sun, well drained soil, little or no water once established
Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Perennial small rounded shrub, two-lipped flowers in whorls along spikes	Sun, well drained soil, little water
Scented Geranium	<i>Pelargonium</i> spp.	Perennial shrub, leaves frilly, fernlike and velvety soft or crisp & round, well veined, fragrant	Full sun on coast, light shade inland, rich loamy, well drained soil, keep slightly on dry side
Sweet Woodruff	<i>Galium odoratum</i>	Low ground cover, with elongated leaves in whorls of 6-8 around the stem, white flowers May - June	Shade to part shade, rich well drained soil. Moderate to ample water
Tarragon (French)	<i>Artemesia dracunculus</i>	Perennial, sprawling, with shiny narrow pointed dark green, aromatic flavorful leaves	Full sun, moderate to regular water, well drained, fairly rich soil
Thyme	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Perennial creeping ground cover with small oval leaves, fragrant, flowers small white or lilac	Full sun to light shade, light welled drained soil that is fairly dry, some summer water in hot areas
Violet	<i>Viola odorata</i>	Perennial low growing heart-shaped leaves, wt, rose, or violet flowers	Full sun on coast, some shade inland, rich moist soil
Vitex	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	Deciduous shrub or small tree, leaves with 5 – 7 leaflets, flowers conspicuous 7" spikes, white to lavender	Sun or part shade, tolerates most soils, well drained, tolerates low water, best with water
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Perennial feathery leaves to 8 in. w/ small flowers in 3-4 in. umbels on upright stems, wt, pink, red, yellow	Sun, well drained, dry, poor soil

