



Herb gardening for beginners



Herbs are loosely defined as small plants used for cooking, medicine, decoration, or perfume. Many beginners to gardening are advised to start with herbs. The reason is because herbs are very easy to manage. Most herbs are usually hardy, and do not require much fertilizers, space, or pruning. In their natural state, these herbs live in relatively difficult conditions where other plants would probably not thrive. But, no matter how easy it is to grow them, every beginner still needs a few basic tools plus some directions to get them started.

The first thing is of course, deciding which herbs to plant. Most beginners are bewildered by the many different types of herbs out there. A tip is to check out cookbooks or the supermarket shelf to get an idea of what kind of herbs are useful. Get a good mix of annuals, biennials, or perennial herbs.

- Annual herbs – Basil, chamomile, garlic, dill, coriander, chervil
- Biennial herbs – Parsley, foxglove, caraway
- Perennial herbs – Chives, cornflower, thyme, Echinacea, lavender, marjoram, mint, tarragon, lemongrass

The usual tools for outdoor herb gardening

You don't need to dig very deep because the seeds will be sown near the surface, so a small shovel and spade should be enough for digging, while a fork or cultivator can be used to poke hardened soil. A pruning shear is useful for cutting stems, and a watering can with small holes makes it easier to control the water being poured out (herbs usually don't need a lot of water).

The rule of thumb for watering herbs is to have the soil damp for an inch or so, down from the surface. If you have that, your herbs should be having enough water. You can also setup a **soaker hose system**, which slowly leaks out water and are very useful for slow drip watering. They can be held in place by plastic or metal spikes, but keep them a few inches from the base of your herbs. Soaker hoses should not be buried beneath soil as this can damage them; place them on the ground surface and cover them with mulch instead.

Mulch is made from wood chips, bark, or pine needles and they are useful for keeping the moisture in and also preventing weeds. A 3-4 inch layer of mulch is adequate, but leave an inch of space from the base of plants when laying down the mulch. This prevents too much heat and moisture buildup, which can lead to fungal attack on you herb plant's roots.

As you can see, it doesn't take much to get a herb garden started. Some simple tools, seeds, work, and patience; and in a few months you should be having a thriving herb garden. And the harvest should be well worth it!