

Grow your own herbs



Daphne Lambert
Greencuisine Trust

Since ancient time herbal plants have shaped our world. For millennia we have used herbs from flavouring food to ceremony, strewing, dyeing fabrics and healing medicine.

Worldwide there are 1000's of medicinal and culinary herbs. Here is a collection of common western culinary herbs. In addition to adding flavours to food, they all have healing properties that offer a remedy for simple ailments.

All of these herbs enhance wellbeing through their beauty, aromatic flavours and healing compounds.

I am a lover of plants but not a herbalist. I have, however, had the great privilege over the years to work with some amazing herbalists, so my knowledge comes from them rather than any training. Any plant whether food or medicine can cause a severe reaction in some people. Before taking herbs for any illness seek medical advice from a qualified herbal practitioner.

Daphne Lambert
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Why grow your own herbs

fresh shop bought herbs are expensive

after your initial investment you will enjoy a high return

many perennial herbs will last for years

freshly picked herbs have more flavour & phytonutrients

adds vibrant flavour to foods

easy to grow with minimal effort

reduces packaging

reduces food miles - herbs are imported from Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco

many offer growing options, windowsill, windowbox, doorstep, patio or garden

you're in control - so no nasty chemicals

perfect cut and come again plants

fresh herbs add vibrancy to food

pollinators, especially bees, love flowering herbs

herbal bouquets make lovely gifts

growing your own inspires deeper thinking about the entire food system

Tips to get started

buy herb seeds or plants from a trustworthy supplier; see resources.

if your space is limited grow the herbs you use most in cooking.

think about your growing options,

indoors or in the garden

in pots or in the ground

shade or sun

dry or moist

pick herbs regularly during the growing season to encourage new growth.

Basil - *Ocimum basilicum* annual

Grow

Grows well from seed but best sown where it is to be grown. Basil prefers well drained moist soil and loves the sun. In the garden choose a sunny sheltered spot, and be sure to protect from a late frost. Will grow well on a sunny windowsill in a pot.

Cook

Partners well with summer foods from tomatoes to strawberries. Tear the leaves rather than chop. Basil combines really well with garlic especially when both are used with tomatoes.

Heal

Leaves added to food aid digestion. Made into a tea can relieve flatulence. Steeped in apple cider vinegar acts as antiseptic. Essential oil is good for helping mental fatigue and can calm you when you are tense or anxious.

Marigold - *Calendula officinalis*, annual but readily self seeds

Grow

Grow from seed in a pot, a window box or the garden. Marigolds prefer a well-drained soil and love sunlight. The cheery flowers bloom from early summer to late autumn.

Cook

The petals look lovely tossed in salads and create a yellow hue in rice dishes as well as in cakes and puddings.

Heal

Marigold flowers contain antiseptic, anti-fungal and antibacterial properties that promote healing. An infusion or cream is a good remedy for skin problems.

Chervil - *Anthriscus cerefolium*, annual

Grow

Chervil is a hardy, pretty, mild aniseed flavoured herb. Sown in autumn seedlings will over winter and produce lush foliage in the spring. Can also be sown in the spring. Prefers light soil, semi shade and being kept moist. Grows in a container or the garden but doesn't like to be transplanted.

Cook

Use fresh (doesn't dry well) in salads, soups, grain and egg dishes. The subtle slightly sweet flavour enhances the flavours of other herbs. It is one of the traditional French 'fines herbes' mixture.

Heal

An infusion of chervil can be used to stimulate digestion and reduce inflammation associated with headache and sinusitis. Chervil can be used in an eyewash to refresh the eyes. Chervil is a good source of anti-oxidants vitamin C and carotene.

Chives - *Allium schoenoprasum*, perennial

Grow

Chives, an onion flavoured grass like herb, grow best outdoors in the garden or a container. Easy to grow from seed. Divide in Spring every 4 years. They grow best in rich damp soil in a fairly sunny position Evergreen but will die back in harsh winters. Flowers loved by bees.

Cook

Add chives at the end of cooking so as not to lose the flavour. Chives go well with jacket potatoes, eggs or stirred into thick yogurt as a dip. Use the flowers and leaves in salads.

Heal

Chives added to food can stimulate the appetite and promote digestion. Allicin in chives is connected to lowering blood pressure and quercetin also present in chives can lower the risk of stroke and heart attack.

Coriander

Grow

Sow seeds in early spring in situ; seedlings do not like being transplanted. Grows best in the garden rather than a pot and needs a fairly light soil and sunny position. Will not survive frost and flourishes best in a dry summer.

Cook

The leaves have an earthy pungency and are used a lot in Eastern cuisines. The seeds are warmly aromatic. Crushed they are used for flavouring in baking and confectionery and as a spice. Coriander is a member of the carrot family and the root can be cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

Heal

Coriander is good for digestion and eases flatulence. It can be used to stimulate appetite and the leaves can be chewed to ease nausea.

Dandelion *Taraxacum-officinale* perennial

Grow

Seeds from wild species can be sown in the garden but the seeds from cultivated varieties are less bitter. Grows in most soils in full sun or partial shade. Pick leaves when they are young, flowers in full bloom and dig roots in the autumn.

Cook

Use leaves in salads or wilted in olive oil as a vegetable. Flowers can be added to salad or used to make wine. The infused dried and roasted root makes a tasty drink.

Heal

One of the best herbal remedies for kidney and liver complaints . The leaves are a powerful diuretic. The root is mildly laxative and acts as a digestive. Use as an infusion, tincture or add to food.

Lemon Balm *Melissa officinalis* perennial

Grow

Lemon balm grows equally well in the garden or a pot. Sow seeds in the Spring in prepared trays and plant out in the summer. Lemon balm is tolerant of most conditions but prefers fairly rich soil, dappled shade and being kept moist. Divide established plants in the autumn. A well-known bee plant.

Cook

The lemon-flavoured minty leaves used fresh are good in salads, omelettes, with summer fruits and makes a delicious sorbet. Lemon balm infused water is a refreshing summer drink.

Heal

An infusion of fresh leaves helps with anxiety, depression & nervous tension. It's also a good drink after meals for digestion.

Marjoram *Origanum* perennial

Grow

There are many species and varieties of marjoram. With the exception of winter marjoram and sweet marjoram they are perennial. The most aromatic variety is Greek oregano. Buy a plant or sow seeds outdoors when all frost is past. Grows equally well in the ground or pot. Prefers a light soil and a sunny position.

Cook

Oregano is easy to dry and retains its flavour. The leaves fresh and dried are an excellent addition to all Mediterranean food including pasta, pizza, fish and cheese dishes.

Heal

An infusion of oregano has a tranquillising effect and relieves stress and anxiety. The bruised leaf can be rubbed on gums as a temporary relief from toothache.

Parsley *Petroselinum crispum* biennial

Grow

There are three common types of parsley; curly leaf parsley, flat leaf parsley and Hamburg, grown for its celery-type root as well as leaves. Parsley grows well from seed but is very slow to germinate, taking up to 6 weeks. Parsley can be grown in container or the garden. It flourishes in moist, fertile soil in a sunny position with a little shade.

Cook

Flat leaf parsley has a more robust flavour than the curly leaf variety. Flat leaf parsley is used in soups and stews, with fish, vegetables and stuffings. The milder flavour of curly parsley works best in subtle dishes. Treat the roots of Hamburg parsley like parsnips.

Heal

Parsley is rich in phytonutrients and vitamins especially vitamin K which helps support bone health. An infusion can be taken as a general tonic. It is a strong diuretic and used to treat urinary infections.

Rosemary - *Rosmarinus officinalis*, perennial

Grow

Rosemary grows well from cuttings or alternatively buy a plant. Rosemary thrives in a well-drained soil in a sheltered sunny position. Rosemary grows well in a pot but will need to be sheltered over winter.

Cook

Rosemary is an intense pungent herb so add to food with care. Toss whole sprigs through a tray of vegetables before roasting. Rosemary infused apple cider vinegar and olive oil are perfect condiments to have at hand.

Heal

Rosemary is an antiseptic herb with anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties. The oil improves circulation when rubbed on affected joints. Taken as a tea it soothes the nerves and stimulates digestion.

Sage - *Salvia officinalis*, perennial

Grow

There are many varieties of sage. They grow well from cuttings but can also be grown from seed. Sage grows best in well drained, rather limey soil in a warm position. All sages will grow in containers.

Cook

Sage has a strong pungent taste with a bitter tang that works well with fatty foods especially cheese. Fresh sage leaves are good in risotto tossed through pasta and with onions make a great stuffing.

Heal

An excellent tonic herb high in anti-oxidants. Sage is particularly useful to relieve sore throats. Sage is clinically proven to help relieve hot flushes during menopause.

Thyme - *Thymus vulgaris*, perennial

Grow

The best way to grow thyme is from cuttings. Alternatively buy a plant. There are many varieties of thyme and all grow well in a container or in the garden. Thyme flourishes best in well drained poor soil and does not like cold wet winters. Thyme grown in pots will need protection from a harsh winter.

Cook

The pungent flavour of thyme works well in Mediterranean dishes blending well with garlic, olives and tomatoes as well as red wine! Aromatic thyme is good with eggs, cheese and mushrooms. Thyme dries well and retains its flavour.

Heal

Thyme has strong antiseptic properties. An infusion is a useful remedy for coughs, cold and flu. Thyme is considered a strengthening herb excellent for cases of exhaustion and useful for anaemia.

Spearmint - *mentha spicata* perennial

Grow

Mint is a very large family with spearmint the most widely grown variety. Best grown from root cuttings. Grows well in a container.

Cook

Mint partners well with grains, vegetables, salads, fruit, chocolate and summer drinks.

Heal

An infusion helps sooth headaches and indigestion.

Salsa verde

makes about 200ml

2 large handfuls flat leaf parsley roughly chopped

1 handful mint leaves roughly chopped

1 handful basil leaves torn small

zest of 1 lemon

garlic clove finely chopped

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon capers roughly chopped

150 ml olive oil

Mix together all the ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste and let sit for an hour before serving.

Tabbouleh

serves 4

1 cauliflower chopped very finely

1 cucumber peeled, seeded and diced

6 medium tomatoes seeded and diced

6 spring onions finely sliced

handful each of parsley, mint & tarragon chopped

handful rocket chopped

juice of 1 lemon

pinch of salt & good twist of black pepper

Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl, let sit for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Optimal human health comes from eating nutrient dense foods produced and processed in ways that maximise both the quality and quantity of nutrition.

Ecological health is integral to human health. Food grown using nature based, regenerative farming practices, manage sustainably the complex interactions between water, energy and food, thus protecting and enhancing the environment whilst producing nutritious food.

- buy organic food whenever you can
- eat seasonally
- source your food as locally as possible
- join a box scheme
- grow your own (garden, allotment or community garden)
- support food & farming campaigning organisations

Resources

<https://vitalseeds.co.uk/product-category/herb-seeds/>

<https://www.beansandherbs.co.uk/organic-herb-seed/>

<https://seedcooperative.org.uk/collections/herbs>

<https://www.organiccatalogue.com/plants-bulbs/featured-plants/potted-herbs>

Daphne Lambert is an eco-nutritionist focusing on the interactions between agriculture, ecology and human nutrition.

Greencuisine Trust works to bring about a transformation in the way we eat. Through practical food experiences the Trust highlights the connections between our well-being, natural resources, the environment, and our planet.



Greencuisine Trust
daphne@greencuisinetrust.org
www.greencuisinetrust.org
<https://www.instagram.com/greencuisinetrust/>
<https://www.facebook.com/GreencuisineDaphne/>

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