

INDOOR HERB GARDENING

The basics for growing indoors are important and will contribute to the success of your herb gardening.

Light Most herbs need about six hours of direct sunlight either from a south or west facing window.¹ Alternatively you can grow herbs 6 to 12 inches from two 40-watt, cool white fluorescent bulbs for 14 to 16 hours per day.²



Kitchen counter herb garden Kevin Lee Jacobs

Temperature and air circulation Keep herbs away from radiators or heat vents which can overheat them and dry them out.³ The room temperature should be between 65-70 daytime and 55-60 nighttime, however, many herbs will endure some cooler temperatures even down to 40 degrees for short periods but some, like basil, will not.⁴ Grouping plants closely together can increase the humidity but can also diminish air circulation. If plants need additional air circulation a small fan can be placed in the area but avoid a direct draft.⁵

¹ Miller, C.

² Kelly & Sanchez

³ Miller, R.

⁴ Kelly & Sanchez

Humidity If the indoor air is dry, place the herb pots in a tray of stones and keep the tray filled with water but do not allow water to cover the pots drainage holes.⁶



Herb pots on rocks in planter

The soil temperature and humidity may be more easily maintained by growing plants in pots within a window box with soil filled up to the top of the pots⁷ Combining herbs in a hanging basket may allow for both a humidifying effect and free up counter or window sill space.



S. Cory Tanner, ©2017, Clemson Extension

⁵ Kelly & Sanchez

⁶ Miller, R.

⁷ Hahn, K.

Containers for growing indoor herbs

As noted above, you can use single pots or containers large enough for multiple herbs but whichever you choose you must have adequate drainage at the bottom of the pots/containers. If you start with small pots you will probably have to repot as the herbs grow. They may need some additional root space and those roots will be needed to support the plant as it grows larger over time.

Repot



<http://www.finegardening.com/article/how-to-repot-container-plants>

Repot the herbs when the roots start to grow through the drainage holes. If you are combining herbs in a planter allow for the tap root herbs like borage (*Borago Officinalis*) or Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) to have sufficient depth while the non-taproot herbs that are more trailing can take up the upper portion of the planter.⁸

Watering the herbs

Water regularly and thoroughly with room-temperature water. Bay, marjoram, oregano, sage, and thyme need to dry out between watering.⁹ Certain herbs such as bay (*Laurus nobilis*), marjoram and oregano (*Origanum* spp.), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), and thyme (*Thymus* spp.) should dry out slightly between waterings, however, rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) should never be allowed to dry out completely.¹⁰

Fertilizing



Most herbs will benefit from occasional feeding, approximately every two weeks or per the manufacturer's instruction, with a liquid fertilizer, such as fish emulsion, seaweed or a general-purpose, water-soluble fertilizer.¹¹ Too-vigorous growth will produce foliage low in essential oils and therefore bland taste.¹²

Soil

Herbs need a well-drained soil that is not too rich.¹³ The Soil should have a pH of 6-7 and contain a moderate amount of organic

⁸ Kelly & Sanchez

⁹ Kelly & Sanchez

¹⁰ University of MD

¹¹ Miller, C.

¹² MacKinsey

¹³ University of MD

matter.¹⁴ If you are using potting soil, check the label to make sure it complies with these properties.

Harvesting



Denny Schrock, Herb Care Guide

For most indoor grown herbs, you will be harvesting leaves but you can pick flowers and use them together with the leaves.¹⁵ According to MacKensey of the University of Minnesota, "many herbs will contain the best flavor if harvested just before flowering. For mint-family herbs, make the cut a few inches down the stem and just above a set of leaves. New growth will arise from buds at this point, and a bushier plant will result. This is especially important with annual herbs such as basil and marjoram, which can become woody, less productive, and somewhat bitter if allowed to set seed.

¹⁴ Kelly & Sanchez

¹⁵ Miller, C.

Seed production will also hasten the end of any annual herb's life.

For carrot-family herbs, cut each leaf stalk at the base of the plant, rather than just trimming off the tender leaf blades of parsley or cilantro, or the ferny growth of dill. For these plants as well, flowering signals the end of the plant's life, and the flavor of the foliage may not be as pleasant once the plant flowers."¹⁶

Cooking with Herbs

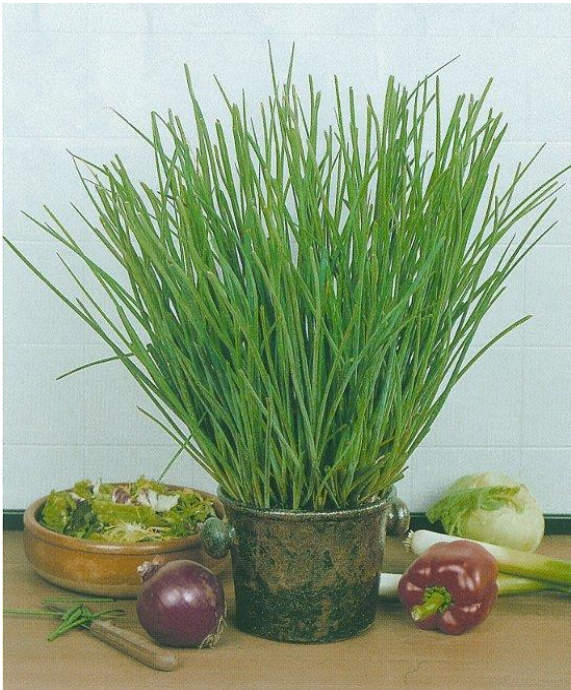


There are two schools of thought on adding herbs to your cooking. Some people think they should be added at the end of the cooking.¹⁷ however, they can be added at the beginning and at the completion of cooking, additional herbs can be added to taste. According to Browning, when using fresh herbs in a recipe that calls for dried herbs, the general guideline is to use 3 times the amount of dried herbs indicated.

¹⁶ MacKinsey

¹⁷ Browning

Chive



www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+chives

The chive plant, *Allium schoenoprasum*, is a member of the onion family (Alliaceae) and its grass-like hollow leaves have a mild onion flavor.¹⁸ Keep Chive damp and don't allow it to dry out.¹⁹ Harvest chives by snipping leaves from the base of the plant.

Chive is also one of the “fine” herbs used in French cooking.

Lore: Chive was among the herbs Charlemagne listed in 812 to be grown in the imperial gardens.²⁰ Marco Polo brought Chive back from China.²¹

¹⁸ Bremness, p. 40.

¹⁹ Boxer

²⁰ Dombik

²¹ Bremness, p. 40.

Oregano



www.google.com/search?q=picture+of+oregano

Greek Oregano, *O. vulgare* is a low spreading herb with peppery flavored pale green ½ to 1-inch fuzzy leaves, and erect reddish stems.²² The leaves can be harvested any time after the plant is 6 inches tall.²³ Seed propagated plants often do not come true from seed so it is suggested to obtain plants grown from cuttings.²⁴ *O. vulgare* is the best oregano for culinary purposes. Use only the leaves unless you plan to remove the sprigs after cooking.

Lore: Created by Aphrodite as a symbol of happiness. Aristotle considered it an antidote to poisoning.²⁵

²² Bremness, p. 104

²³ Browning

²⁴ University of Illinois Extension.

²⁵ Bremness, p. 104

Thyme



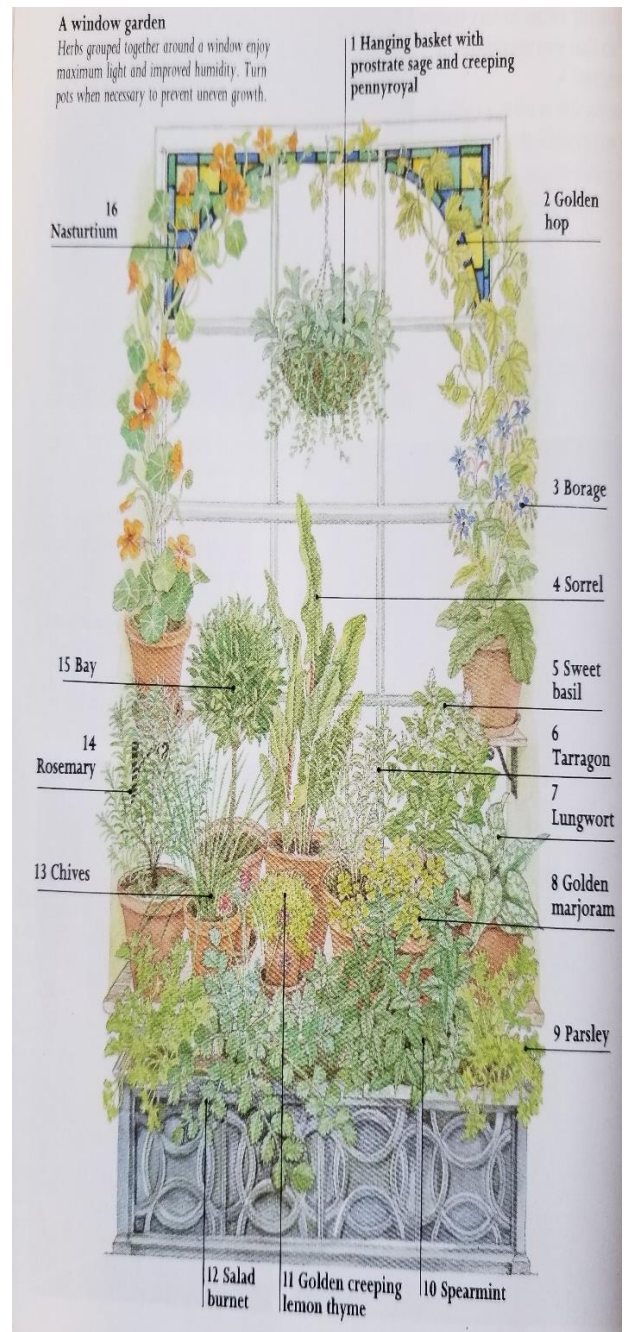
www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+thyme

There are many varieties of this herb, but the most popular and flavorful is Common thyme (*T. vulgaris*), which is low growing with 4-8 inch square wiry-stems with aromatic, pointed oval grey-green leaves.²⁶ Thyme is also one of the truly “fine” herbs used in French cooking.

Use sprigs in cooking and remove or use only the leaves of Thyme if leaving this herb in a prepared dish.

Lore: In Greek thyme means courage and was worn into battle as well as used as an antiseptic to ward off disease.²⁷

Good Luck on the Indoor Herb Garden



Bremness, p. 24

²⁶ Bremness, p.142.

²⁷ Dombek

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*Presentation by Carol Holmquist and Liz Parker
Vermont Master Gardeners
May 8, 2018
Accompanying power point available upon request.*