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Planting an Herb Garden

Start with a twelve feet by twelve feet garden, or you might only start with a four by four foot square, using some or all of the herbs below if they appeal to you. Add a bench and perhaps a sundial, and *voila!* As you gain confidence, you can enlarge the garden and add more plants.

Begin with something familiar.

Parsley is a nice herb to start with. It comes in **two types**, a flat leafed Italian type and the curly, extra curly or sometimes even extra curly dwarf type. They all taste like parsley so pick the one you like the look of. Some **cooks prefer the Italian** and say it has a better flavor, but honestly, I think the curly is prettier when you use it as a garnish. It also looks tidier in the garden.

Basil is popular, too. Most of us have eaten and enjoyed it in spaghetti sauce. It is also easy to grow. There are lots of varieties of basil on the market and some people make a big fuss over which type to grow. If you are starting out, try the plain old sweet basil and maybe a **purple-leaved variety** just for some extra color in the garden.

Mint is also familiar and most people like the flavor. Mint needs moist soil and can take over the garden so grow it in a big pot which you can keep well watered. Mint is the official "Herb of the Year" this year so there is an almost **bewildering variety** of named types to chose from. Spearmint is yummy in fruit salad and in your iced tea, peppermint tastes a bit stronger, some of the mints have two-toned decorative leaves and so on. Your best bet is to bruise a leaf and buy the one that smells the best.

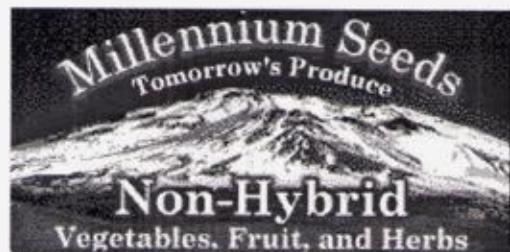
Chives are a nice addition to the herb garden if for no other reason than their blooms. Ordinary **garden chives** produce

purple blooms in May, garlic chives bloom later in white. Garlic chives have a flatter leaf and a stronger oniony taste. I use ordinary chives in my flower garden and garlic chives in my vegetable garden so that tells you what I think!

Thyme is a wonderful herb for the garden and for the kitchen. I think I use thyme more than any other herb. **Thyme** was herb of the year last year and so there are lots of named varieties of it floating around, too. Basically, they are all edible. Specialty thymes are collector's items and can be fun to grow, but for starting out I would suggest one of the **creeping thymes** for its flowers and a French thyme for **kitchen use**. Trimming it back will keep the plant in a tidy way and give you a **nice harvest** at the same time.

Dill is a good herb in the kitchen (pickles or potatoes anyone?) but it is not such a good ornamental herb garden **plant**. It gets tall and weedy looking so I grow mine in the vegetable garden. **Fennel** will provide a similar **textural effect** in your herb garden and it behaves better. The bronze fennel can add an especially decorative look.

Sage is often grown in the herb garden but unless you make your own sausage or use an awful lot of sage-seasoned stuffing at Thanksgiving you may have a hard time finding ways to use it. The saving grace is that it makes lovely **flower spikes** in the spring and adds some structure to the garden during the winter. (It is a sub-shrub!) There are also some very attractive varieties grown especially for ornamental effect. Tri-colored sage and Berggarten sage are two nice selections you may run across at the nursery.



We reserve the right to replace varieties with like kinds of the same quantity as availability fluctuates.

Ship time on seeds is now 2 weeks!

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