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## About the Author

Bryan Wallace wrote this [book](#) to help other gardeners get better results with growing herbs.

Bryan said, " [Herbs](#) are mostly easy to grow. Almost anyone can do it in their garden or even just on a window ledge."

"if you have just a limited space available, you can add some color and scent to your surroundings and some extra zest and flavor to your [meals](#) ."

"People of all ages can get enjoyment from growing and using herbs."

"Herbs are a good way to get your kids interested in gardening too. They don't take a lot of effort and your [children](#) will see some results within a few months. They can also make items from some herbs which would be great for cheap gifts that have the extra attraction of being hand-made!"

"Many herbs are fairly hardy but different types have their own favorite conditions. My book will give every reader a good start in what can become a life-long interest."

"They don't require constant attention so growing herbs is a type of [gardening](#) which is easy to fit into your busy lifestyle."

"Readers will get to know the best ways to care for their herbs from my book so they have a great chance of [success](#) right from the start."

"I've written the book like I was helping a good friend who wanted to start growing their own herbs. Everything is described in simple steps which I know will work."

"I've used my own experience and also what I've learned from friends and experts who have grown herbs in a wide variety of places and conditions."

"This book is my way of paying back for the help and enjoyment which I've got from growing and using herbs."

## Introduction

It is easier to grow herbs than to define what is or isn't a herb. A general definition of "herb" is "a useful plant".

Cooks at all levels of experience will find it worth the time and effort to grow some of their favorite herbs themselves. They get control over the type of plants they grow and also the growing conditions and treatments which the plants receive.

But, the usefulness of herbs extends to crafts, cosmetics, fabric [design](#) and other areas.

Many are used in [food](#) preparation and there are many which have been claimed to have medicinal properties. There are also many which would be worth space in your garden just for their ornamental value.

Some provide some protection for your other plants from pests and [diseases](#).

And, herbs are used in a variety of [crafts](#). You can combine your interest in crafts and gardening and possibly make some [money](#) at the same time!

I will show you how to plant and grow them, and give you some basic information about using them.

Gardening of any kind always has risks. Many times, the results you get are more dependent on the conditions the plants experience through their growing season as much as it is the care and support you provide.

So, maintain a positive attitude and accept that you will have some failures among the herbs you grow.

**Getting Help:** As well as using the advice in my ebook, you will find it worthwhile to look for help from more experienced gardeners in your area. They will have knowledge of the best herbs and varieties to grow in your region and probably can advise you of the best [sources](#) for your plants and supplies.

Also, please [check](#) the **Resources** section at the back of this ebook for useful links to organizations and other information about growing and using herbs.

## Mistakes

All gardeners suffer some disappointment at times. No-one can guarantee that your efforts will always get good results.

These [tips](#) will help you avoid most errors but don't worry, mistakes are inevitable and the lessons we learn from them tend to stick in our [memory](#) so we don't repeat them.

**Don't Give Up:** When you strike a problem or you don't get the results which you expected, remember that all good gardeners make those same mistakes.

Your [desire](#) to grow any herbs in future might be reduced if your first lot don't thrive. If you let it get you down, you'll miss out on some enjoyment and much healthier produce in the future. But, if you persist you'll learn more, earn more and [meet](#) a lot more interesting people.

Use the lessons nature teaches you and don't consider them failures.

**Start with Plants:** While seeds are often recommended for starting to grow herbs, you can reduce the time you wait to see any results by using cuttings or seedlings, where available. It's like starting any new activity, you want to see some results as soon as possible so you know whether you are doing things in the right way.

This makes those first attempts more enjoyable.

Keep this in [mind](#) if you have [children](#) that want to grow some plants themselves then choose some fairly hardy seedlings for their first attempts.

**Get into a Garden Club:** You could look for a group that is focused just on herbs but you'll find that every garden club will have some members that specialize in growing and using herbs. The usually low fees that clubs charge are a bargain because you get access to the combined knowledge and hard-won experience of all the members.

The clubs often have deals with local or Internet suppliers which can save you [money](#). Then there are the social aspects at the local [meetings](#) and trips to larger State or National events.

**Clip the Right place:** It might seem a good [idea](#) to harvest the larger

leaves at the base of your plants. These are better left as they are important for supporting the healthy growth of the plant over time.

Take some of the smaller ones near the top of the plant. They will be fresher and give better flavor.

Cut Early and Fairly Often: You might expect better results if you wait until your plants have grown to reasonable size before cutting off your first leaves. But, herbs are fairly tolerant to being cut frequently.

The place you cut is where the new growth will start, so that's how you train the plant to the shape which you want it to grow into.

Make your cuts above a healthy pair of leaves and the new growth will start there.

If you want the most leaves, tweak out most of the buds before they start to unfurl or the plant will waste some of its [strength](#) in [developing](#) buds that you just pluck off.

When you want flowers for display or to add to your [food](#), then you let the buds develop.

**Keep Mint Confined:** Mint is a very useful plant but it should always be planted in pots so it is prevented from spreading. Otherwise, it will take over the whole area which is available to it.

If you want the mint to appear to be free-growing, plant it in your pot. Then, bury the pot so that the top of the pot is just at or slightly below the level of your soil.

Put your mint where it will get a reasonable amount of sunlight. It may be less vigorous if it is always in the shade.

**Related but Different:** Many herbs, including mint, oregano and basil have varieties which are quite different in appearance and/or taste.

Always [check](#) which type you should use for the type of dish you want to make. Be aware that some people mis-label the actual variety they supply due to lack of experience.

Mexican oregano is strongly flavored. The Greek oregano is milder and won't be as popular with your friends who like hot dishes.

Golden oregano is milder.

They are also popular as decorative edging plants.

**Never Self-medicate:** Some herbs are recommended for treating medical conditions. Never attempt this without first checking with your [doctor](#) who knows your medical history and conditions you have or may be at risk of.

Let me use the humble **dandelion** as an example.

The dandelion is a herb. Some people [claim](#) it may help people that have hypertension but some of the risks which could result from using dandelions include [skin](#) rash, excess acidity and a strong diuretic effect.

There are some official links in this ebook's resource section which relate to safe use and precautions with herbal preparations.

**Experiment:** Many people stick with the varieties of herbs which they've grown or at least eaten before. They miss out on a lot of enjoyment and an easy way to enhance their reputation as a cook!

When you are ready to expand the number of herbs which you grow, pick a couple of varieties which you have not tried before.

Many of the most popular herbs have many varieties with distinct differences in appearance, scent and flavor. You can make your [cooking](#) more interesting by trying something new from [time](#) to time.

## Growing Herbs Organically

Growing your own herbs and [vegetables](#) is a big step toward providing your [family](#) with healthier and probably safer crops.

You will notice a difference when you pick and consume your own plants. But, you will probably find that your costs are not significantly lower when you consider the extra supplies, time and effort involved.

You will control what products are used on your plants and the type of plants you use.

You will also encourage and increase the activity of beneficial insects such as [bees](#) which are at risk whenever any poisonous sprays are used around flowering time.

The residues of those [sprays](#) can also affect anyone that eats what you produce.

If you want to start using organic gardening methods in your garden, you might start by setting up your own compost bin or pile. The bins make it easier and also are less likely to upset your neighbors.

A compost pile is not as easy to manage. The traditional [method](#) of burying your compostable material in trenches and then using that area for new garden beds when the material has broken down requires more effort and time.

Herbs need some nutrient in the soil. It also needs to drain well as they don't thrive when [water](#) accumulates around the roots.

Organic mixtures are available or you can make it up yourself from sterile soil, [builder's](#) sand and compost with some organic fertilizer if you are unsure of the richness of the soil.

Organic fertilizers need to be applied at the right stage and allowed to combine with the soil before you plant your herbs or other plants.

When you are setting up, it may be worthwhile to have a professional soil test done so that you know if there are any important deficiencies in your growing medium.

Also, pH test kits are readily available from garden [stores](#) and are simple

to use.

Organic supplies are becoming easier to obtain due to the increasing awareness people have about the risks we already [face](#) because of some other materials which have been widely used.

## Get the Watering Right

Getting the amount of [water](#) right is critical. Less water more often is possibly the way to start.

Check the amount of water around the plants some hours after watering by pressing your thumb into the top inch (3 cm) of the soil. If the area is very moist, you may have soil which doesn't drain well enough or you applied too much water.

Some herbs, like basil, will show the effects of under or over watering fairly quickly. This can be a helpful indicator for you while you are just starting to grow herbs.

Earthenware pots tend to let water drain fairly quickly and plastic pots hold water around the roots unless there are sufficient drainage holes.

Moisture meters with a long spike which you push down near the root area can give you a useful indication of the amount of moisture there, but you will probably be able to judge what your plants need after a bit of time.

For convenience, always group plants which have similar water requirements near each other.

## More Tips for Better Herbs

**Water Requirements:** Many plants can thrive when getting some water once or twice a week but other herbs, like basil, need more water and will start to [show](#) signs of [stress](#) fairly quickly if they are not getting enough for their needs.

**Clip Early and Often:** Don't let your plants grow large before you start to harvest the leaves. If they are allowed to grow tall, they won't be as productive or as healthy.

Usually, you nip out the flower buds where you want to get more leaves. If you also want some flowers for display, let some plants produce their flowers and get most of your leaves from others.

**Give your plants a boost at the start:** Using soil from last year's garden is false economy. Previous plants have probably exhausted most of the [nutrients](#) the soil had.

You can add more fertilizer and trace elements to old soil, but it's better to give your plants a good start with fresh soil or potting mix which you know has plenty of nourishment for them.

## Where to Grow Your Herbs

**Where to Grow:** Outdoors or Indoor? Consider the local climate, the types of herbs you most want to grow and the particular needs of the herbs you have.

Many thrive in pots or plant boxes as well as in a properly prepared garden bed.

Herbs may be more vigorous if you plant them in garden beds but they may also try to take over. Mint is one which should always be potted unless you want a whole garden bed which is mostly mint!

Sunlight is very important with most herbs. About four hours on most days is enough. You may need to check the area where you have your herbs to see if there are any significant differences in the amount or intensity of the light available for your plants at different times.

Be aware that some areas are having significant [changes](#) to the range of conditions which they have usually experienced in the past. You may find some plants are not as productive in your area as they used to be. The upside is that you may find you can successfully grow plants which were previously poor growers where you are.

If your herbs don't grow as productively indoors, you might want to try giving them some time outside or add a suitable light to the area where you keep them indoors.

Indoor production reduces the risks from pests and unsuitable weather but may also mean that production is lower.

But, one great advantage is that you can move the plants in their containers around when conditions are unfavorable.

You can even move them outside when the conditions are suitable.

Outdoor herbs may produce more and are said by some to have better flavor, although I've been very happy with the flavor of those I had indoors.

In your garden, you can grow herbs as companions to suitable [vegetables](#) (see the "Companion Planting" chapter) for mutual benefit.

You will need to allow an area of up to 3 feet (90 cm) for each plant. [Check](#) the information with the plants or seeds you buy so that you don't crowd your plants too closely together.

That would reduce the amount of sunlight the plants can get and affect their growth and [health](#). You can also try a variety of gardening [methods](#).

## Raised Beds

Raised beds are one [method](#) which has benefits for the plants and also reduces the amount of effort you need to maintain and harvest your plants.

This is a great way to reduce the amount of physical effort needed for your gardening.

Instead of [building](#) up your beds just a few inches as gardeners have done in the past, you build your garden beds inside frames which set the beds at a [height](#) where you don't need to bend and [stretch](#) when you work on them or plant and harvest your crops.

The raised beds also make it much easier to check all parts of your plants for possible problems.

The sides of the beds can be made from recycled materials to reduce costs.

You can take this [idea](#) a step further and insert frames into a larger raised bed to provide smaller sections and plant different types of herbs in each one.

This makes it possible to produce a wider range of plants in a smaller space and reduce the labor needed as well.

[Plan](#) a path about 15 inches or 35 cm wide around the beds for ease of access. Your [plants](#) will grow better because you are not stepping on or near them and you can easily do any maintenance from the paths.

Depending on the space you have available in your [home](#), you may want to set up a few of your the herbs you use most close to your kitchen while growing a wider selection in your garden which you use when you have more time available.

## Popular Herbs to Start with

Herbs are fairly hardy but you will get best results if you put a little time and effort into preparing and fertilizing the soil to give them a good start. Also, don't plant them in your garden until the warm weather has started. These are some of the most useful and popular herbs.

### *Chives*

These green stems have a mild onion flavor which is great in many popular summer dishes.



Plant seeds directly into your soil in rows about a foot or thirty cm apart. When they start to grow, thin the plants so they are about 6 to 12 inches apart. You may find other people will accept the plants you remove into their gardens.

You can save some time and effort by planting commercially grown plants at the same concentration once warm weather starts.

### *Parsley*

Parsley is a tasty garnish and also an effective breath freshener which tastes better than the heavily promoted commercial breath sprays.



**Risks:** Parsley may be risky for people with kidney or gall [bladder](#) problems.

Parsley is grown both inside and in gardens, but likes several hours of sun each day. It can tolerate some shade. Usually grown from seed, germination is slow. Some speed up germination by putting boiling water on the seed before planting.

Rich, well-drained soil (pH around 6.5) is suitable.

### *Basil*

Basil is an annual plant. It develops fairly quickly and the short [life](#) cycle means that you will see the effects of what you do with your plants fairly

quickly.

There are many distinct varieties which are used in different ethnic cooking styles. If you have the space and time, plant a few different types to try out. You may then share your new experiences with your friends and [family](#).

Basil seeds can be started in a tray placed in a warm location. They are ready for transplanting when they are a few inches high and the garden is getting reliable warmth each day in early summer.

Some people sow their seeds directly into the garden late in spring. But, giving them a more protected start and then transplanting them can give your plants a [boost](#).

You can help your tomato plants by putting some of your basil near it. I have more detail about the benefits of these arrangements in the section on companion planting.

### *Oregano*

This herb has three main types used by gardeners. There are a [number](#) of other varieties which are not used much outside of the countries to which they are native.

The Greek variety is the one most used for [recipes](#) from the Mediterranean area and is very popular for adding flavor to everything from soup to pizza. Mexican oregano is stronger and there is a Golden type which is not as flavorful.

All three can also be used as border plants.

Greek oregano is the most widely available from commercial suppliers.

**Warning:** Some people may have a strong, negative reaction when they have anything which includes this plant. [Chest pain](#), rashes or affected



breathing may occur. Pregnant women are advised to consult their [doctor](#) before using or eating oregano.

Plant seeds in rich, well-turned soil with a pH between 5 and 7.

Good sun is required.

Oregano grows best in well-drained soil. Add Perlite if your growing medium holds the water in.

The plant only grows slowly, so you have to [weed](#) the area regularly or its progress might be checked by the more vigorous weeds.

Transplant seedlings when they have 4 sets of leaves developed.

Set out your plants about 12 inches (30 cm) apart.

Oregano is suitable for growing indoors provided that adequate sunlight or a suitable artificial substitute is available to it.

Regular watering is also essential.

Several insects will attack oregano, so make it a [habit](#) to inspect your plants when you water them. Take prompt action on any bugs to reduce damage to the plants.

### *Mint*



This is the ideal herb to begin with. It's harder to stop mint growing than to raise it successfully.

The main problem is that you must confine it or it will take control of whatever area it can.

There are plenty of different varieties for you to consider.

Be careful to get your mint from friends or people who you know are reliable. Some types of mint do not have the right qualities for use in your [cooking](#).

But, you will get great results from setting aside a confined area for your mint.

It's probably not worth trying to grow from seed as some will not grow

true and the seedlings may become root-bound in small trays very quickly. Pots should be at least 4 inches (6 cm) square or round.

Try getting seedlings from reliable suppliers or cuttings from friends who already have some growing.

## Other Useful Herbs

### *Dill*

Dill is fairly easy to grow as an annual in warm regions where you get temperatures around 75 degrees F.

The leaves are pliable and sweet to taste while the seeds have a little bitterness.



Dill is most used in pickling but it is also used for [soups](#), [breads](#), [fish](#) dishes and dips.

[Craft](#) workers use the foliage as a filler in their arrangements.

It is a tall plant and may need stakes for support.

Sow seeds directly to your garden when the frosts have gone.

Planting new seeds every couple of weeks will give you more plants right through the season.

It likes about 6 hours of sunlight each day. If you put it indoors, you will probably need long periods under suitable lighting.

### *Lavender*



This popular decorative plant retains the popularity it has had since ancient times.

It is related to rosemary, thyme and sage.

Lavenders will help to attract [bees](#) to your garden.

It is widely used by craft workers. Simple sachets or bunches of dried lavender are good [sellers](#) at markets.

Root rot can develop if you grow it in a medium which does not have

adequate drainage.

[Plants](#) are long-lived and deliver good quantities of stems, but the quality may taper off after about 4 years.

Americans are not big users of lavender in the kitchen but that is changing. Definitely worth hunting out some suitable [recipes](#)!

Deciding which varieties are best for you, depends on the climate in your area.

Some lavenders tolerate frost much better than others but none I have grown like high humidity.

Check with friends or members of your herb or garden [club](#) who have grown some and also try the links to heat and hardiness maps in the resource section at the end of this ebook when deciding what varieties you want to try.

New lavender varieties are released every year because it is fairly easy for experienced growers to develop new strains which have more of a particular trait.

## Caring for Your Seedlings

You are more likely to get healthy plants if you put at two or three seeds in each, instead of just one.

If you grow some of your herbs from seeds, it's worth getting a couple of those plastic trays with little compartments to start them off, at least with your first few times.

These trays have a plastic cover which make for a cozy environment and prevent access by pests.

They mean you don't have to use much water because most of what you apply will be retained in the cells.

You could also use peat pots and put some growing medium in them. They would have the advantage of being dropped with the seedlings in the pots or garden bed where you put the herbs. That reduces any risk of damage from transplant shock for your seedlings.

Another popular option are compressed disks which contain peat and growing medium. You add a little water to make the disks expand and soften. Then, you add two or three seeds.

When the seeds have started to grow, you [drop](#) the disk into the pot or garden bed where you want it and the plant uses the nutrient in the disk.

Whichever type of container you decide to use, you can expect better results when using a potting medium and not garden soil. That's because the soil probably has had most of the nutrient removed by whatever you grew in it before.

Water with a [spray](#) bottle or some other means of applying a fine, gentle spray. Overwatering is a major cause of damage to plants.

Put newspaper over the trays and put them where they will not get cold.

Check them regularly but don't disturb the soil to see if they are sprouting. You could damage the first plants that way.

Give them another [light](#) spray when you [believe](#) they need it.

Make sure that the soil is loose so that the seedlings can easily break through it.

Newly sprouted seedlings need [light](#), but direct sunlight may be too harsh in some areas.

Transplant them with some medium attached when they are at least 2 inches (5 cm) high. Be very gentle. Keep handling to a minimum.

If you put them in larger pots, have the level of growing medium at least a half-inch (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cm.) below the rim of the pots.

## Companion Plants

Apart from their main uses, some herbs are useful when planted as companions to other plants in your garden.

### *Good Combinations*

Basil, for instance, is recommended as a companion for tomatoes. Its main value is helping to keep slugs and snails away. The presence of basil is claimed by some gardeners to result in better flavor in the tomatoes. This may simply be the result of the basil keeping some of the bugs off the tomatoes.

Some people also plant parsley with their tomatoes.

Here are some more examples of "good companions":

Nasturtium is good with pumpkin, cabbage and squash.

Chives help carrots, apples and brassicas.

Dill is good with cabbages, onions and cucumbers.

Lavender has many attractive qualities which I detail in another section but it is also a useful companion for cauliflowers and cabbages.

Oregano is good with brassicas, including cabbage, broccoli and mustards.

### *Bad Combinations*

There are also plants which do better when they are kept apart.

Keep your dill away from your carrots and tomatoes.

Keep basil away from sage.

Keep chives away from beans and peas.

## Harvesting Your Herbs

One great thing about growing [herbs](#) is that you usually don't have to wait until the plants reach full growth before you can start getting something back from your efforts.

Once the plants are established, you can start gathering pieces from your plants and using them for [cooking](#) or decoration while the plants continue to produce more for you to use later on.

Taking leaves and flowers from most of your herbs will actually encourage more vigorous growth.

Just be patient while they are becoming established.

Then, you actually do the plants a favor when you start harvesting the parts you want. Leaving them on the plant will mean they lose some of the oil or visual appeal which you grew them for.

Most established herbs usually don't [mind](#) frequent picking, but, don't overdo it.

Taking too many leaves in the early stages of development could reduce the plant's [health](#) and sharply reduce the harvest you get from it. Most experts say up to 50% of the new growth may be picked from.

Leave the larger leaves at the base of the plants. They help to support the rest of the plant as it continues to spread up and out. They are also the plant's main way of getting sun and the growth of most herbs is related to the amount and duration of sunlight they get through their growing season.

The higher and smaller leaves are the ones which will be the best for you to use anyway.

If you want flowers from the plants, most should be picked when they are just about to open.

If you are mostly interested in the leaves of a particular plant, you should pinching out most of the buds as soon as they appear. This will encourage the plants to produce more new leaves instead of producing extra flowers you don't want.

Pick off your leaves just above a strong pair of leaves so the plant will be encouraged to produce the new growth from that vigorous point.

You can safely pick a couple of leaves or an odd bit of stem almost any time. But, try to arrange to do your main harvesting at a time which suits the plant so that there is minimum impact on it.

[Mornings](#) are best. Just let the dew go off the plant but pick what you want before the sun is high enough for the warmth to build up too much.

If you pick when the plants are wet with dew or rain, any rubbish on the leaves you get will stick to them. You will have to get that off carefully before you try to dry them or use them for [cooking](#). They will also have a greater risk of becoming moldy if you put them away with some moisture still on them.

While you are picking leaves is a great time to check your plants for possible injury or infection. Always carefully examine the underside of its leaves, because that's most likely where the bugs and signs of [disease](#) could show up.

Although you may usually be able to nip the leaves off with your fingers, keep a pair of sharp scissors with you in case you want to remove a woody part of a plant for use or disposal. Your fingers may not be strong enough or you may cause further damage to the plant if you apply too much pressure.

### ***Getting Seeds***

With some herbs, you can see the seed heads and harvest them after they change [color](#) and the petals are gone.

Herbs with smaller hidden seeds often have small paper bags tied over the entire flower, either while it is still on the plant or after it is cut and hung upside down indoors.

When you open your dried seed heads, you can usually separate the actual seeds from dust and pieces of the seed [head](#) by pouring everything into a shallow tray and gently fanning it. The rubbish will float off the heavier seeds. If you have two trays, put everything in one and then gently pour it all into the other tray which you set a couple of inches lower

down. That agitation should be enough to blow away most of the rubbish while the seed collects in the bottom tray.

Use a piece of paper-covered wire to hold the bag in place. Rubber bands are often used but they are dangerous to [birds](#) and other creatures and should never be used in your [garden](#).

## Drying Herbs

There are several ways to dry herbs for [cooking](#) or other uses.

### Air Drying

#### *Air drying Herbs on a Tray.*

Use a shallow tray with some cheesecloth under a single layer of leaves or seeds.

Don't use more than a single layer or the plant material will not dry evenly because the air will not reach the parts which are under other parts.

Turn the leaves or seeds regularly and very gently very couple of days.

The length of time needed for the [process](#) and quality of results will mostly depend on the temperature range, humidity and [air](#) circulation.

Use great [care](#) when the leaves are completely dry to [store](#) them in a sealable container.

If you dry seeds, they will probably also need careful handling. Gently remove any dust or dirt still on them and store them the same way.

#### *Air-drying in Bunches*

This [method](#) suits long-stemmed herbs best.

It takes [practise](#) to get good results. As always, I advise getting some local knowledge from an experienced herb grower in your locality to shorten the [learning](#) curve wherever possible.

Cut the top few inches early in the day after the dew is gone from the leaves.

Remove any damaged or sick-looking material before hanging the bunches.

Leaves should be dusted with a soft brush to get any dust etc off before starting the drying process.

Don't rinse them if they are clean as some oil may be lost.

If you need to lightly rinse them to get sticky material off, try to get as much of the water off afterwards.

The room where you hang your bunches of herbs should be warm, have

good air circulation and no direct sunlight on the bunches.

Do not put them where they may be affected by [cooking](#) smells or other odors during the drying process.

Remove any risk of dust or other material landing on the bunches by putting each bunch, stems up, in a paper bag before hanging them. Either punch holes in the sides of the bags or cut away the bottom of each [bag](#) so that there is still good air circulation.

Hang them with the leaves down so that as much oil as possible will settle in the leaves.

### ***Freeze Herbs***

Some herbs which you can freeze are basil, mint, sage, dill and mint.

Many people add a sprig of mint to a cold drink, but you can also freeze a mint sprig in an ice cube and [drop](#) it in a drink for some extra appeal. Try that also with a strawberry and an attached leaf too!



If you boil the water before you make the ice cubes, the contents of the cubes are likely to be easier to see.

After lightly washing the herbs, gently dry them and put a single layer in a shallow pan. Then, put them in the freezer.

Or, you can chop them into ready-to-use pieces and freeze them in zippable plastic bags or small re-sealable containers.

Squeeze as much air as possible from the bag or container before sealing it.

### ***Drying Herbs in Your Microwave***

I **do not** recommend this method because you could easily ruin them with too much heat and there is a strong risk that you might start a fire.

This is only included for background information.

Also, it will only work with a small amount of herbs at a time and it is very hard to [control](#) the result.

Some people use their microwave when they have very humid conditions or a herb which has a high moisture content and is hard to successfully dry.

They spread a few herbs, usually with most of the stem removed, on paper towel (not recycled) and cover them with another piece of paper towel.

Then, they apply no more than 20 seconds of [power](#). After checking the condition of the herbs, they may apply another short amount of power.

## A Little Care Gets Best Results

A bit of care and thought will help you to get the most from your herbs for the longest time. Keep these [tips](#) in [mind](#).

Only pick [clean](#) healthy plant material. Avoid any which looks unhealthy or damaged.

Many herbs are okay with being clipped frequently but there are risks of overdoing it. If you take what you need up to half of the recent growth of your herbs, there should be no problem with most plants.

But, large quantities in a short period may cause some shock to the plant and reduce its output and general vitality in the future.

Always have a suitable container with you to put your harvest in as you go around your various herbs.

I use a basket with a flat tray so that I can keep the different plants separate and don't have to put many on top of the others. This reduce [pressure](#) on the material and retains its quality.

Remember to put a soft cloth or paper towel in the container to put the leaves etc on.

Always wait until the growing season is finished before harvesting roots from plants.

Don't handle the cut-off pieces or the plants more than absolutely necessary. Many herbs will bruise quickly and that will downgrade your future harvest from them.

Using mulch under the herbs in your [garden](#) will reduce the amount of dirt which gets on the plants. That gives any bugs less litter to hide in and also reduces the risk of infection.

If your plants are muddy or have other rubbish on them, water them gently the day before you harvest them to wash it away. Use a soft brush to remove any rubbish which remains when you pick them.

Don't dip them in water because they may become moldy before you get to dealing with them.

Always watch the plants' development to make sure you pick them at the

best time to get the most [oil](#) or other quality ingredients in them.

If you delay your harvest to fit your own timetable instead of the plants', you will probably get a less bountiful result.

**Tool Tips:**

**1]** Sharp scissors are essential. Blunt or poor quality [blades](#) will damage your plants and reduce the amount of useful herb matter which you get from them.

**2]** Clean and dry all tools after each use. Otherwise you may transfer diseased material or dirt which you removed onto other healthy [plants](#)!

## Tips for using Herbs in Crafts

Some people get even more enjoyment from their herb [garden](#) by growing and using some herbs for their craft work.

When you use herbs in this [way](#), you can create uniquely personal gifts or even highly popular items for resale.

### *Using Flowers*

Leave some inches of stem on flowers when you harvest them if you are using them for crafts so that the flowers don't fall to pieces.

**Picking at the right time:** You get the best results when the flowers you collected were allowed to open completely before they were harvested. If they are picked while still partly closed, you may ruin the bloom when trying to press it flat.

**Make your arrangements look more natural:** We expect most flowers in a bouquet to be fully developed but most floral arrangements always contain some stems at different stages of development for contrast and to make the piece look more natural.

So, be sure to pick some of the flowers you dry to use in your [crafts](#) at different stages of development so that you have that natural look in the pieces which you make.

## Resources

### Heat and Hardiness Maps

**Please read the supplementary material which is provided by the various organizations along with their maps to better understand the limitations of the information and other factors which should be considered when using them.**

Use the collected experience of friends or members of your local gardening [club](#), who have grown plants in your area, to learn how to fit the information of the maps into your planning.

The United States Department of Agriculture produces a very useful map which classifies areas of the country according to the lowest temperature usually recorded in that area.

Other organizations produce maps which complement this iconic resource, including some for other countries and those which focus on other factors.

Gardeners can use these as a [guide](#) when deciding which varieties of [plants](#) should suit their conditions.

Of course, there can be wide variations between the maximum temperatures usually experienced in those locations which usually have similar minimum temperatures. So, you need to take these other factors into account before [making](#) your purchases.

Also, the zones particular places are allocated to have been changing over the years.

Despite this, the maps are consulted by most serious gardeners and updates are made fairly regularly.

*U.S.A.*

**United States Department of Agriculture**

**Interactive Plant hardiness Map**

<http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/InteractiveMap.aspx>

The American Horticultural Society produces a map which classifies areas of the U.S.A. according to the highest temperatures usually recorded there.

### **The A.H.S. Plant Heat Zone Map**

<http://www.ahs.org/gardening-resources/gardening-maps/heat-zone-map>

This map will help you learn which varieties of plants will suit the highest temperatures usually experienced in your area.

### ***Australia***

Climate Map (1990) on the Australian National Botanic Gardens site.

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/gardens/research/hort.research/zones.html>

Climate Maps for Australia on the "The Diggers [Club](#)" gardening [shop](#) site.

<http://diggers.com.au/help/climate-maps.aspx>

## **Organizations**

### ***U.S.A.***

#### **The Herb Society of America (HSA)**

<http://www.herbsociety.org>

From their website: "The Herb Society of America (HSA) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that focuses on educating its members and the public on the cultivation of herbs and the study of their history and uses, both past and present. The motto of The Society (is) "For Use and For Delight".

### ***U.K.***

#### **Herb Society UK**

<http://www.herbsociety.org.uk/>

From their [site](#): "Over 80 years as the U.K's leading society for increasing the understanding, use and appreciation of herbs and their benefits to [health](#)."

## *New Zealand*

### **Herb Federation of New Zealand**

<http://www.herbs.org.nz/>

## **Health and Safety**

### *U.S.A.*

[Food](#) Safety Information from the F.D.A. for production and Handling of fresh Culinary Herbs. [Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2013]

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodSafety/Product-SpecificInformation/FruitsVegetablesJuices/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/UCM337902.pdf>

### **Dietary and Herbal Supplements | NCCAM**

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements>

**From their site:** Apr 1, 2013 - **Information** and resources about [Dietary](#) and **Herbal** Supplements. ...Basic **information** on using dietary supplements wisely, including **safety** and regulations,

### **Herbal Information | Food and Nutrition Information Center**

Information on dietary supplements in the U.S.D.A. National Agricultural Library.

<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/dietary-supplements/herbal-information>

### *U.K.*

Safety warnings and [Messages](#) for Herbal Medicines from the MHRA, a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Safetywarningsalertsandrecalls/Safetywarningsandmessagesformedicines/Safetywarningsandmessagesforherbalmedicines/index.htm>

From their site: This section provides **information** about current **safety** issues associated with **herbal** medicines. Advice to manufacturers, suppliers and practitioners of **herbal** medicine .... General enquiries: [info@mhra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@mhra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Have a Happier, Healthier Life with Herbs!**

Thanks for buying and [reading](#) my [book](#).

I hope you find the herbs I've described useful and that the information adds some zest to your meals and other parts of your [life](#).

***Bryan Wallace***

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)