

# Growing Herbs

Herbs are low growing annual or perennial plants which have soft, juicy stems, at least when they are young. They are usually grown with a "Practical Purpose" in mind, such as culinary or aromatic use, or sometimes even for their medicinal properties.

The three most important elements to growing herbs are light, temperature, and soil. Most herbs require full sun, at least five hours a day, and well-drained soil. Some examples of these would be rosemary, sage, thyme, savoury and lavender. However there are exceptions such as mint, parsleys, and coriander which prefer richer soils containing composts or loam. Mint needs wetter conditions and should be confined by an edging barrier since they spread rapidly.

Herbs labelled Tender Perennials such as rosemary, bay, lemon verbena, some lavenders, among others, must be overwintered indoors. The most convenient way to do this is to grow them in pots or tubs and enjoy them in the garden or patio as the weather permits. Bring them back inside well before the first frost and place them in a cool, bright location. Herbs will require sixteen hours under fluorescent light during the winter. Try to use one warm and one cool white fluorescent tube. Also maintain a winter temperature of 65°F in the day and 55°F in the night, decrease watering, and cut back your foliage by 1/3.

In early spring, newly purchased plants will need to be carefully accustomed to the outdoors. If they are very green and leafy, they may need to be kept in a bright window until the weather moderates.

Keep plant shapely by trimming their tips. Plants which are overwintered indoors may need weak winter growth pruned back in the spring.

## Hints

- As a rule of thumb, the thinner the leaf the more water the plant will need.
- Fertilize with a good quality slow release fertilizer (6-12-12) or with a water soluble fertilizer.
- Annual herbs will use more water than established perennial herbs because they are actively growing.
- Perennial herbs need care early on until they are established. Plant them as the soil is warming up in late May to June, and make sure to water until the plant is established.
- Pinching and using herbs will help the plant to be more compact and less leggy.
- Enjoy frequently!

