

# TOP TEN TIPS FOR GROWING HEALTHY HERBS

(According to "Herb Whisperer" Charlotte Gardner)

- #1**—Use good quality, well drained soil. If growing in the ground choose a location with good drainage or amend the soil to drain well. Herbs do NOT do well in heavy clay soil—especially the “woody” Mediterranean Herbs (such as lavender, rosemary, sage, oregano, thyme, bay & winter savory). If growing herbs in a container do NOT use garden soil—always use a good quality potting soil and make sure that all containers have plenty of drainage holes!
- #2**—Be sure that you place herbs in a location that receives at least 6 to 8 hours of sun. Some herbs prefer a bit more sun (basil, lavender, sage, rosemary, thyme, marjoram & oregano), tho others are a bit more adaptable (dill, cilantro, parsley, tarragon, chives, lemon balm, & mint) and will tolerate a bit less sun.
- #3**—Place herbs that have similar light as well as watering requirements in the same area in the garden. If growing herbs in a container it is VERY important to combine only plants that have the same light as well as watering requirements in the same container. "Woody" Mediterranean herbs will not tolerate "wet feet" or overwatering. Such pots need to dry out slightly in between waterings! The "fleshy" herbs (basil, parsley, dill, cilantro, mint, & chives) like to be kept moist, tho NOT saturated! In general herbs will "tell you" what they want-if plants are starting to wilt they need more water, and if plants are being overwatered they will start to lose vigor and the roots will rot and plants will die.
- #4**—Use fertilizer sparingly and choose an organic fertilizer such as fish emulsion, fish/kelp combo or Espoma brand organic. Remember you will be eating the leaves and flowers of your plants—as will pollinator insects-and you don't want to be eating chemicals! In addition, fertilizer encourages rapid growth that is low in the essential oils. For the best flavor and fragrance you want to maintain slow, steady growth on your herb plants.
- #5**—Stop fertilizing herbs by late August/September as you don't want to promote new growth that will be susceptible to winter kill! In addition, stop harvesting large quantities of leaves/stems at that time.
- #6**—DO NOT use any chemical pesticides on your herb plants! This includes systemic chemicals (*those that are put into the soil and the plant takes them into the tissues*) since you will be eating the leaves and flowers and such chemicals will also injure or kill the valuable pollinator insects!
- #7**—Do not prune perennial herbs too early in the Spring! Wait until plant starts to put on new growth so you can determine what part of the plant has actually suffered winter kill and is not just still dormant!
- #8**—Do NOT plant more tender herbs such as basil until SOIL temperature—as well as air temperature is consistently warm in the Spring! Plants will be much healthier if you wait until weather stabilizes!!!
- #9**—For best flavor and fragrance harvest herbs before the plants start to flower. However don't stress about removing flowers from plants such as basil as it really makes little difference in flavor and leaving the flowers intact provides necessary nectar for pollinators as well as ornamental beauty and fragrance in your containers or in the garden!
- #10**—Feel free to plant generous amounts of herb plants in and around your vegetable garden or containers in order to attract and feed pollinator insects and improve pollination and fruit set!!!