

Planning an Herb Garden

There are a variety of reasons for planting an herb garden. All the reasons will lead to your enjoyment. First, they are fragrant in your kitchen and in your garden. They are tasty and add zest to many recipes. They add texture, shapes and a variety of green shades to your gardens. Many herbs attract butterflies, providing them nectar and places to lay eggs. Some herbs have medicinal purposes. And, most herbs are pest free. It just takes a little know how to plan for a successful herb garden.

First, check your soil condition to ensure it can provide the needed nutrients. If you have not done so in the last 3-4 years, have the soil tested. Most herbs want slightly alkaline soil.

Next, observe your yard and available garden sites. Make a sketch. Check how much sun and wind your selected site(s) get. Sun-loving plants need six hours of direct sun. Most herbs are sun loving. Check for low areas in the ground that would hold too much moisture, thus causing root rot.

Plant herbs when the weather turns warm and there is no chance of freeze, just like vegetables. Herbs can be started by seeds indoors on a heating mat in March. Read the back of the seed package for planting instructions. Herb seedlings are available at nurseries in April.

Some varieties of thyme make excellent ground cover. They can be planted between stones. Some of the more popular varieties of creeping thymes are: Silver Lemon Queen, Wooly, Herba Barona, Coccineus, and Golden English Wild.

Growing herbs is not limited to the ground. A variety of patio pots make excellent herb gardens. Several like plants can be planted in the same pot. Be sure you have at least 6" of soil.

Putting an herb pot outside the kitchen door makes it easy access to the cooking. Just snip.

Indoor or outside kitchen window herb gardens are handy and attractive. For the outside garden, you could simply nail a metal or wooden box to the window sill, fill with potting soil and add a variety of herb plants.

Hanging baskets also make attractive herb gardens - just add several compatible herbs.

Know your herbs. The best way to find information about 12 most popular herbs is to go on the Tulsa Master Gardeners Website (tulsamastergardeners.org), click on "Lawn & Garden Help", then "Herbs".

Know which herbs to plant together and which to plant separately. Some common companion plantings include:

- Basil, parsley, and oregano
- Rosemary, sage, and thyme
- Coriander, rue, anise, and dill

And, some rules of thumb are:

- Chives, mint and coriander like moist soil
- Rosemary, thyme, sage, bay, and oregano like dry soil
- Fennel attracts butterflies but repels many herbs and vegetables, so plant it away from such
- Fennel cross pollinates with dill
- Rue does not grow well near sage, basil, and cabbage
- Basil does not grow well with sage
- Parsley hates mint, so plant separately

Once backyard gardeners establish where to grow herbs and what to grow together and separately, they are on the way to beautiful and bountiful herbs. Be creative out there!

For more information on planning an herb garden, visit or call Tulsa master Gardener Extension Office at 918-746-3701 or drop by at 4116 East 15th Street, Tulsa.

Relative OSU Fact Sheets:

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| HLA-6440 | Planning the Landscape |
| HLA-6430 | Landscaping to Attract Butterflies, Moths and Skippers |
| HLA-6033 | Raised Bed Gardening |
| HLA-6402 | Children's Gardens in Which to Learn and Grow |