



How to...



DID YOU KNOW?

The tallest basil plant in the world grew to be nearly 11 feet high.

Grow an herb garden

You don't need gardening experience or a lot of space to enjoy this hobby.

Herbs are plants that have leaves, seeds, or flowers and can be used for many purposes. Some, such as lavender, are used in products to help people sleep more soundly. Others, like aloe vera, can help heal cuts and burns. Many herbs are also used in cooking. These plants are easy to grow, can thrive inside or outside, and can be grown in a container or garden. Here is how to plant your own herb garden.

Make your choices

Decide which herbs to grow. If you and your family like to cook with certain herbs, you may want to start with those. You can buy seeds or seedlings (young plants) at a local nursery (a store that sells plants), or you can order them online.

Get started

If you're using seeds, cut the lid off an empty egg carton. Fill each section halfway with potting soil. Place one or two seeds in each section. Cover the seeds with a little more soil, and water them gently. Loosely wind plastic wrap around the egg carton to trap moisture, and put it by a sunny window. If you're using seedlings, you can skip this step.

Plant the herbs

Once seedlings have four or five leaves on their stem, they are ready to be planted. You can plant them in a garden or in containers with drainage holes. (Place indoor containers on a tray.) Choose a spot that gets five to six hours of sunlight a day. Dig a hole in the ground or about two inches below the rim of your container. Gently lift the seedling and its roots and soil and place it in the hole. Fill with soil, and water it right away. Repeat until all the seedlings are planted.

Water and weed

Continue to water herbs as needed. They grow best when the soil is slightly moist but not super wet. A good test: Feel the top inch of soil. If it feels dry, add water. If you see weeds, gently pull them out by their roots. Some herbs need trimming. Plants like basil and cilantro will grow bigger if you cut off the top leaves before they flower.

Enjoy your harvest

The best part about herbs is you can snip a few leaves for recipes while the plant continues to grow. Stir cilantro and oregano into store-bought salsa to add flavor. For more ideas, see the suggestions at right.



You can pick your own herbs.

Easy herbs to try



Here are three of the most popular herbs and some of the many ways you can enjoy them.

Basil When this plant has at least four sets of leaves, you can begin picking them. You can tear basil leaves to put on pizza, use them to make a pesto sauce, or pair them with tomato slices.

Chives are ready to harvest when their grass-like leaves are about six inches high. Chopped chives can be sprinkled over dishes like scrambled eggs, soups, omelets, and potatoes.

Parsley is ready to be picked when its leaves have at least three segments. Add chopped parsley to pasta, salads, or roasted vegetables. A sprig of parsley can also dress up a dish!