

## Herbs – A Great Way to Spice Up Your Landscape

Herbs are plants that are very useful in our everyday lives. Although the actual definition of an herb is vague, (a plant whose parts are used for food, flavor, medicine, or scent), the benefits of planting them in our garden are very apparent. These wonderful plants give flavor to the very foods we eat, add texture and beauty to the garden, provide fragrance and flair to our homes, as well as make us feel healthier.

Because of the great variety of herbs available, they can be used to fill many landscaping niches in your garden. Herbs can be planted in borders, rock gardens, knot gardens, kitchen gardens, salad gardens, containers, and dry walls. They can also be utilized as ground covers, shrubs, and topiaries. The foliage of herbs is greatly valued but often they provide floral interest.

Herbs are centuries old. In Victorian and Elizabethan times, herbs were grown for various reasons with the most obvious reason being cooking. However, herbs were equally as important in the use of tussie mussies. A tussie mussie is a small floral arrangement that contains fresh cut flowers and herbs. Due to the fact that bathing was not a daily ritual during these times, ladies would carry tussie mussies so that they could smell the lovely scents of the bouquets as opposed to other non-pleasant smells.

Some of the most popular herbs that can be grown in these areas are rosemary, mint, basil, cilantro, oregano, mexican oregano, sage and fennel. Sage and fennel will need to be grown during the spring time, while other herbs can take the South Texas heat as long as soil and water conditions are favorable. Herbs like rich, well-drained soil and adequate water, which generally requires watering in the dry South Texas climate.

Herbs can be grown in borders among the ornamental plants or just by themselves. A kitchen garden includes the herbs you would use in preparing a meal. Salad gardens consist of herbs and vegetables you would use to make a salad. Plant what you use in your daily cooking and then experiment with new herbs to expand your menu. Consider the following recommendations for growing herbs and vegetables you would use to make a salad. Plant what you use in your daily cooking and then experiment with new herbs to expand your menu. Consider the following recommendations for growing herbs:

1. Most herbs are from warm climates so find a sunny location in your yard which receives at least six hours of sun daily. Many gardeners locate the kitchen or salad garden close to the house so harvesting is just a short walk away.
2. Prepare the soil by digging 8-12 inches deep. Incorporate at least 6 inches of organic matter (compost, aged manure, or peat moss).
3. Add a layer of organic material for a mulch, such as bark, shredded leaves, straw hay, or wood chips or shavings. This will maintain a consistent soil temperature and moisture level for better growth.
4. Plant herbs in groupings according to their water and light needs.