



How to Plant a Medicinal Herb Garden

Two Methods: [Planning your Medicinal Herb Garden](#) [Planting your Medicinal Herb Garden](#)

An herb is a plant that has a leaf, seed or flower that can be added to food, medicine or other products. Many herbs have a medicinal capacity when used to treat minor illnesses. Having a healing herb garden on hand may help you to treat burns, colds and more with a small portion of the plant, while it continues to grow for future treatment. Herbs need sunlight, well-drained soil and regular attention to grow in any garden. It is a good idea to learn how herbs are used to treat ailments before you plant them, so you only grow what you will use. Read more to learn how to plant a medicinal herb garden.

Method
1

Planning your Medicinal Herb Garden

1 Decide if you want to have a backyard or windowsill garden. If you choose to plant a windowsill garden, you will have less space and soil to work with because you will need to grow each plant in a pot. If you want a traditional yard garden, you will need to till soil in your lawn in order to plant the herbs directly in the ground.

2 Decide how many plants you would like to grow. It is a good idea to start with 4 or 5 and expand after you have used your herbs medicinally and know what you will need. The following are plants that are often found in medicinal herb gardens:

- Grow echinacea. Both the *E. purpurea* and *E. angustifolia* types are sold in nurseries and used in tinctures and teas to boost the immune system. Both the root and the flowers are valued for their medicinal properties.
- Grow chamomile. The chamomile plant may be referred to as *matricaria recutita*, *M. chamomilla* or *chamomilla recutita*. The flowers are used in teas to treat muscle spasm, inflammation and tension. You can dry the flowers after they are picked and plant them in enough soil so they will self-sow for the next year.
- Grow Yarrow. Yarrow, or *achillea millefolium*, is a flower in the aster family. Its leaves and flowers are used to staunch blood flow in cuts and minor bleeding. It can be dried for that purpose or made into tea to treat colds.
- Grow lemon balm. Lemon balm, or *melissa officinalis*, is used to treat insomnia, anxiety and problems with the digestive tract. Lemon balm leaves can be dried and made into a tasty tea.
- Grow peppermint. Peppermint, or *mentha piperita*, is a hybrid mint plant. The menthol oil results in the flavor and also makes it a good treatment for nausea, muscle spasms and fever. Peppermint should be grown in pots because it can be invasive. Harvest leaves for tea.
- Other good medicinal options include valerian for nerve relaxation, feverfew for pains and fevers, comfrey for a wound poultice, violets for colds or sore throats, black cohosh for female cramps or asthma, hyssop for congestion, St. John's Wort for depression and ginkgo biloba for increased brain circulation and memory.

3 Consult with local gardeners about what grows well in your region. The warmth and moisture in your area will have a lot to do with what will be successful in your herb garden. If you live in a colder area, you may be able to plant certain herbs on the windowsill and others in an outside garden during the summer.

4 Decide if you want to plant from seeds or seedlings (starts). Seeds are a less expensive option, but seedlings are more likely to make it through the fragile first few weeks of being planted. Seasoned gardeners, and especially those with greenhouses, may want to start with seeds.

Method
2

Planting your Medicinal Herb Garden

1 Buy pots for the most invasive species of medicinal herbs. This includes peppermint, comfrey and yarrow. Invasive species can take over your garden in a year or 2, killing other plants as they fight for the same nutrients.

2 Create well-drained soil. If you are planting in pots or other containers, make sure to add some gravel on the

bottom to be sure the roots of your plants don't rot. If you are planting directly into the ground, most natural soil will drain through, leaving the roots safe from too much water.

3 Place most plants in direct sunlight. Most herbs require 6 hours of sunlight per day to grow. Exceptions include violet and lemon balm, but check all plant directions from a gardening book or seed packet before planting, if you are unsure.

4 Place high-quality potting soil approximately three-fourths the way into your container before planting seeds. If you are planting starts in a garden, dig holes in the soil with a stick so that you can fully cover the roots, leaving just the stems above the soil. Pack the remaining 1/4th with potting soil after you plant the seeds.

5 Water immediately after planting seeds or starts. Keep the soil moist around the plant, but do not over water. You can water delicate seedlings with a spray bottle.

6 Harvest the plants according to package directions. Many herbs can be harvested continuously, but some flower plants may be harvested only once or twice per season. Harvesting encourages new growth on many herbs, so water immediately after harvesting.

7 Many seasonal herbs require you to dry them before use. Depending upon the climate of your house, you can use a warm, dry and dark room to dry them or use a dehydrator. Store them in tins away from sunlight and air.

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Tips

- You can make tea from many medicinal herbs, like peppermint, lemon balm, echinacea and chamomile by pouring 1 cup (237 ml) of boiling water over the dried leaves or flowers, allowing it to steep for 10 minutes and then removing the loose herbs. Drink for colds, insomnia, digestion or an immune system boost.
- Visit neuhsa.org/neuhsagardenmedicinalplants.pdf for more information on what medicinal herbs may be useful in your life. This website also contains warnings for possible adverse reactions to the herbs.
- Look for seed companies that sell packages of medicinal herb seeds. Your package will come with 4 or more types of medicinal herbs, including sowing, harvesting and medicinal use instructions. Look on the Internet or in gardening catalogs for this specialty packet.

Warnings

- Beware that people who are allergic to ragweed pollen may also be allergic to chamomile flowers.

Things You'll Need

- Pots or containers
- Seeds or seedlings
- Potting soil
- Gravel
- Spray bottle
- Water
- Kitchen shears
- Dehydrator

Sources and Citations

- <http://www.ofspirit.com/stephanbrown1.htm>
- <http://www.neuhsa.org/neuhsagardenmedicinalplants.pdf>
- <http://www.herbcompanion.com/gardening/Herbs-anyone-can-grow.aspx>