

Choosing the right types of herbs for growing

Basil is the best herb for pesto, hands down. Its leaves have a warm and spicy flavor. You need to only add a small amount of this delightful herb in such dishes as soups, salads and sauces. Basil is also particular suited, by the way, to season anything dish with tomato flavoring. Don't hesitate to use basil to enhance the flavor of your meat, poultry or fish. You can even add it to your morning breakfast omelet.

You'll want to start your basil plants early in the spring, preferably in a greenhouse or a sun-drenched windowsill. Early in the summer transplant this herb to your garden. Or, if you have the courage, sow basil seeds directly into her garden early in the spring. Or you may want to try your hand at both methods, just in case those seeds don't catch.

Simple Guide to Successful Herb Gardening

2. Chives

Who doesn't love some fresh chives on a hot, newly baked potato? If you're as mad about this herb as me, then you've already noticed that chives have a mildly onion taste. This makes them an excellent addition to salads, any egg and cheese dish, cream cheese, sandwich spreads and sauces. And, oh, by the way, don't restrict chives to just the baked potato. Taste how in adds a little zing to your mashed potatoes as well.

If you plan on growing chives from starter plants, then you'll want to get these into your garden in the early spring. And you'll want to give these plants plenty of room. My recommendation is to plant them a good 9 to 12 inches from each other.

If you plan to plant the chives seeds, then plant them in the fall or the spring, digging down a good half inch and setting the seeds in rows that are spaced about 12 inches apart.

3. Coriander

Now here's a versatile herb. Its versatility is so great that different parts of this plant are known as different herbs. Grinding the dried seeds to use them in your meats, like veal, ham or pork? You're using coriander. Using the leaves to add to some Indian or Asian dishes? You're actually using cilantro. And of course you can use the roots of coriander as well. If you can't use them right away, don't worry you can freeze these. They can be used to flavor soups. Or chop the roots and serve with avocados. You'll find this deliciously delightful!

Even a novice herbalist should have no problem growing coriander from seeds (I know I did it my first time around and there was no novice who was more naïf than I!)

Sow these seeds in the early spring. Dig a hole about ¼ inch in depth. Plant them in rows that are just about a foot apart. Once the seedlings appear, you'll want to thin them down some, making sure they're at least 6 inches from the other.

4. Dill

Here's another herb that you can use both the seeds and the leaves. Both of these parts have a sharp, slightly bitter taste. (But then who among us doesn't know the taste of dill?)

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Don't Be Afraid to Actually Use Your Herbs . . .

Using your herbs regularly in cooking has two distinct advantages. First, of course, it adds an added dimension to your cooking that not only will impress you, but your spouse and even your children.

But using these herbs regularly, you'll also effectively keeping your plants shaped nice and growing healthy.

If you're not quite sure what herbs go with what foods, wing it! That's right! Just experiment. Oh, you could look it up on the web to get all the "authoritative" answers. But by experimenting with different herbs in various dishes, you may hit upon a combination that's perfect for you.

A word of advice here though: start small and then increase. Fresh herbs are much stronger than those bottled things you buy in the store. So a little goes a long way.

More on my book "Simple Guide to Successful Herb Gardening".

About the Author

Julio Villanueva is a herb garden expert and an avid herb garden writer. For more great information on how to grow a successful herb garden, visit <http://www.livelyherbgarens.com>