

Growing and Using Culinary Herbs in Central NC



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Today's Class

Growing Culinary Herbs

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- Herb growing basics
- Tips for specific herbs

BREAK

Using Culinary Herbs

Phyllis Smith



Chives – Leaves and blossoms are edible!

Defining Culinary Herbs

- Technically, **herb** is short for **herbaceous**, meaning any plant that does not have a woody stem
- Herb is often used to refer to any plant that **serves a useful purpose**
 - Medicinal herbs
 - Dye plants
 - Potpourri
 - **Culinary herbs** – plants used fresh or dried to enhance flavor of foods/beverages



Growing Culinary Herbs

The good news:

Culinary herbs are easy to grow!

- Have few pest problems
- Rarely bothered by deer or rabbits
- Require little care
- A little goes a long way!



Growing Culinary Herbs

The bad news:

(It's not really that bad)

- Most herbs need full sun and good drainage
- This is a challenge for shady yards and heavy clay soil



Growing Culinary Herbs

The good news:

Culinary herbs thrive in containers!

- Easily grown on a patio/deck or other sunny area
- Also thrive in raised beds if you choose the right location



The Right Location

Sunny and well drained!

- **Direct sun at least 6-8 hours/day**
 - Less sun = less flavor
 - Shade grown herbs have more disease problems
- **No standing water after rainfall**
 - Herbs grown in poorly drained soils quickly drown or develop root rot



Solution: Containers

Herbs thrive in containers!

- Minimum 8" deep
- Drainage holes in bottom
- Clay containers "breathe"
- Fill with purchased potting mix
 - Mix of peat moss, ground bark, perlite, vermiculite --- no fertilizer



Containers

Volume and drainage
most important
considerations



Containers

Best to grow 1 variety per pot unless growing in large containers

- Easier to manage watering
- More vigorous herbs with take over less vigorous varieties
- Some are annuals that have to be replanted each season



Strawberry pots can be difficult to water



Containers

- Allow containers to dry out between watering
- Then water thoroughly – until water drips out of the bottom of the container
- Never leave sitting in saucer of water
- Fertilize with low rate of slow release fertilizer or organic fertilizer
- Avoid liquid fertilizers on perennial herbs



Overwatered Rosemary

Fertilizers

Apply at planting and 2-3 months later:

- **Time release fertilizers** (e.g. Osmocote) = slowly release nutrients over 2-3 months
- **Organic fertilizers** naturally slow release –feed beneficial microbes

For emergency situations:

- **Liquid fertilizers** (Miracle Grow, Compost tea) = **fast food**, quick boost but no sustained feeding



Option 2: Raised Beds

- **At least 8" deep**
- **4' wide** or less
- **Length** – depends on material used and space available
- Fill with **mix** of soil and compost (50/50)
- Can mulch with pea gravel or ground pine bark



Raised Beds



Get Creative!

But keep
maintenance
in mind!



Herb Flowers

Herb flowers are edible!

- Herb flowers are favorites of many pollinators and beneficial insects
- **Flowering reduces leaf production** – can remove flowers if more leaves needed
- Must allow flowers to mature if desire seed production



Harvesting Herbs

- Best time = early morning
- For most herbs harvest leaves at tips (2"-3")
- Pinch or cut just above a node (where new leaves are sprouting)



Culinary Herbs for Central NC

To grow successfully,
need to know:

Life Cycle

- Annual- cool or warm season
- Perennial

Preferred Conditions

- Sun or Shade
- Soil Drainage
- Fertility



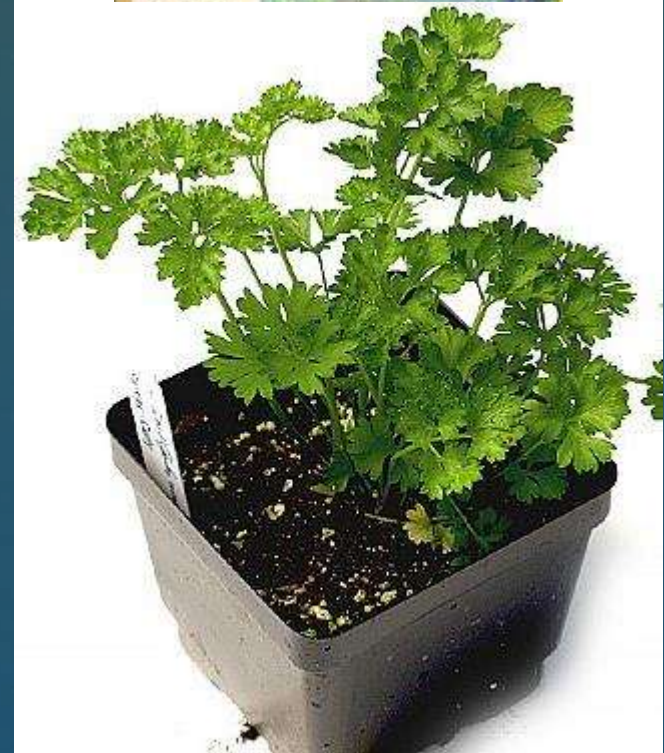
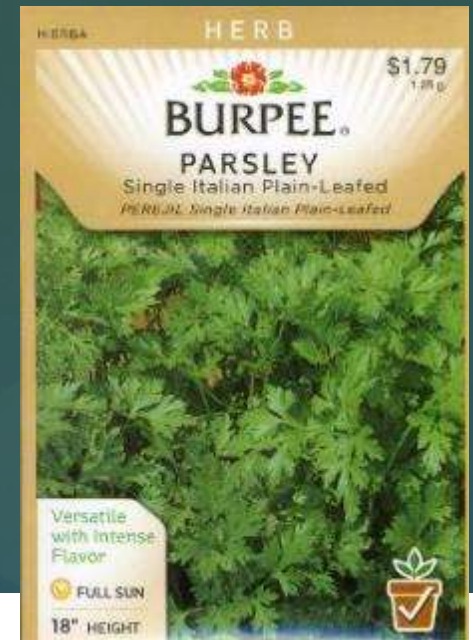
Annual Herbs

Can be grown from seed or transplants

- Seed trickier but cheaper
- Good if need lots of plants

When to plant:

- **Cool Season** =
March/April and Sept.
- **Warm Season** = mid-
April - August



Basil

Ocimum basilicum

- **Warm Season Grower**
 - Very sensitive to frost
- **Easy from seed**
 - Sow new batch every 3 weeks
 - Can overwinter indoors
- **Prevent drought stress**
- Pinch regularly, cut off flowers to keep up production
- Genovese or sweet basil preferred culinary type



Basil Varieties

Greek Columnar -
very upright, 4' tall;
does not bloom



'Purple Ruffles' - purple leaf



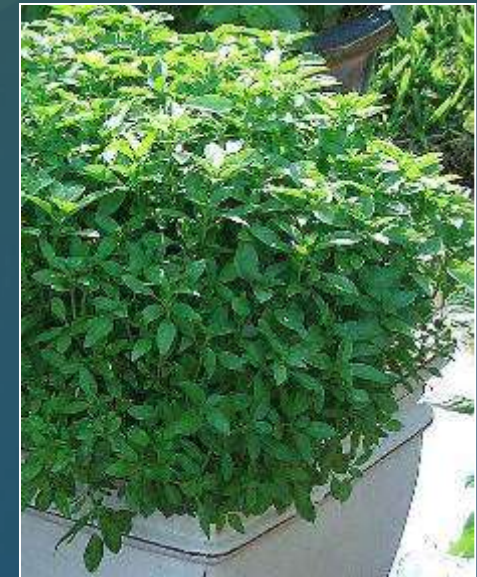
Cinnamon or Mexican
Basil



Thai Basil, 'Siam Queen'
- compact 12"



'Italian Large Leaf' for pesto



'Spicy Globe' -
Small leaves on
compact plants

Basil Downy Mildew

- **New disease** – first recorded in NC 2009
- **Control:** destroy affected leaves, avoid overhead irrigation, spray fungicides
- **Pesto type basils are most susceptible**
- Does not overwinter in NC!
 - spores 'float in' from further south each season, usually shows up in July



Image by Debbie Roos

Other Warm Season Annuals



Cuban Oregano

Plectranthus amboinicus

Strongly fragrant, large fleshy leaves. Grown as a houseplant or ornamental. Sun to pt. shade, well drained, moist soil. Overwinter indoors

Stevia

Stevia rebaudiana

Heat loving, drought tolerant annual (perennial in zone 9). Sun, well drained soil. Add leaves to tea for a natural sweetener



Cool Season Annual Herbs

- Plant Aug-Sept for fall crop; Feb-March for spring
- Die out in heat of summer
- Can grow in winter in sunny spot with minimal heat
- **If room, allow to bloom in summer** – blooms attract beneficial insects and sow the fall crop!



Bolting

Some plants
respond to
daylength

Lengthening
days trigger
reproductive
growth
(flowering)

Cool season
herbs bolt
rapidly in
summer



www.GrowingTheHomeGarden.com

Cilantro in summer

Parsley

- Soak seed for 6-8 hrs before sowing
- Survives most winters
- Dies out mid summer after flowering
- Sun – pt. shade, moist, well drained soil

Curly Parsley

Italian Flat Leaf



Caterpillars

- Black swallowtail larva feed on all members of parsley/carrot family
- Can handpick – grow perennial fennel or extra parsley as 'nursery' crop
- Or spray with B.t, spinosad, or neem oil



Parsleyworms, aka Black Swallowtails

Egg



Young
Caterpillars



Caterpillars



Will also eat:
Fennel, Dill,
Queen Anne's
Lace, Carrot,



Chrysalis

Adult Male



Adult Female

Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare

- Perennial
- Sun – light shade, moist to dry soils
- **3'-5' tall**, yellow flowers in summer – attracts beneficials
- Florence Fennel is related but different, grow as a summer annual



Annual Parsley Relatives



Dill

Anethum graveolens

Not as cold tolerant as parsley, plant early fall and early spring.



Cilantro, Coriander

Coriandrum sativum

Fall and early spring for foliage - successive sowings. Let mature for seed.

More Parsley Relatives

- Caraway
- Chervil
- Cumin

Grown similar to
dill/cilantro

Typically grown from
seed – rarely find
plants for sale



Culinary Herbs for Central NC: **PERENNIALS**



Perennial Herbs

- Most will live for several years if happy
- Most are sensitive to overwatering
- Typically purchased as plants
- Best time to plant outdoors: March – October
- Rarely require fertilizer



Bay Leaf, *Laurus nobilis*, can be grown in a container but is not hardy outdoors in winter.

Mediterranean Herbs

- Many common perennial culinary herbs – Rosemary, Sage, Thyme, Oregano
- **Require full sun, excellent drainage**
- Drought tolerant
- Irrigation and fertilizer lead to disease problems and reduce flavor
- **Expect some deaths during August!**



Oregano



Greek Oregano

Origanum vulgare
subspecies *hirtum*

Preferred Culinary



Common Oregano

Origanum vulgare

Flowers in summer, less
flavorful



Sweet Marjoram

Origanum marjorana

Tricky to grow

Italian Oregano

O. marjorana x *O.*
vulgare

Easier to grow

Sage

Salvia officinalis

‘Purpurascens’



‘Tricolor’



‘Icterina’



‘Berggarten’

Favorite
culinary, large
leaves.

Common Thyme

Thymus vulgaris



Low growing, sensitive
to summer moisture

Lavender blooms in
early summer



Lemon Thyme

Thymus x citriodorus

Lower growing with softer stems.
Several gold leaved and variegated
varieties are available.

Lavenders



English Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia
- not heat tolerant



Spanish Lavender

Lavandula stoechas

Most long lived lavender in NC



French Lavender

Lavandula dentata - not cold hardy



Lavandin

Lavandula x intermedia

'Grosso' does okay

Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis

- Tough, evergreen shrub
- Sun, good drainage
- Drought tolerant
- Deer resistant
- Ornamental and culinary
 - upright and trailing forms available
- Upright varieties typically reach 3'-4' tall and wide or more!



Other Perennial Herbs



Chives



Allium schoenoprasum

Extremely easy from seed or division. Long lived, self seed. Sun well drained soil, drought tolerant.

Garlic Chives

Allium tuberosum

Taller than chives, same requirements. Self seeds prolifically.

Mints

All spread extremely vigorously!!



Spearmint

Mentha spicata

Sun to part shade,
moist to average
soil.



Peppermint

Mentha piperita

Grow in containers
above ground.



Pineapple Mint

Mentha suaveolens
'Variegata'



Apple Mint

Mentha suaveolens

Mexican Mint Marigold

- *Tagetes lucida*
- A perennial marigold!
- Marginally hardy in zone 7
- Tarragon substitute (leaves)
- Yellow flowers in fall, 3' x 2'
- Sun, well drained soil
- More heat tolerant than true Tarragon, *Artemisia dracunculus*



Other Perennial Herbs



Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis

Very easy - sun to part shade, well drained soil. Easy from seed or cuttings.

Salad Burnet

Poterium sanguisorba

Sun to light shade, well drained soil. Leaves have cucumber flavor - best in spring and fall.



Horseradish

Armoracia rusticana

Sun, rich, moist soil. Harvest roots by digging into clump rather than digging whole clump up.

Non Hardy Perennial Herbs

Grow outside in summer, bring inside for winter



Lemongrass

*Cymbopogon
flexuosus*



**Lemon
Verbena**

Aloysia triphylla



**Culinary
Ginger**

Zingiber officinale