

Herb gardens

Put some spice in your life and on your table

Herb gardening can be an enjoyable hobby.

There is such an abundance of plants to choose from: some with narrow foliage, some have very broad foliage; some tiny leaves, ferny leaves, some soft and velvety. Besides, there are the various colors of leaves: gray, purple, variegated, gold, bluish green, dark green or light green. Many also have very attractive flowers.

Man has used herbs for numerous things since ancient time—for culinary seasoning, for medicines, for fragrance, as potpourri and sachet; the dried or green leaves are used for teas. Some are sources for dyes.

Plant some herbs to decorate your garden and use them.

First, it's well to decide whether to have a separate herb garden or just a few, or many. They lend themselves to most any situation; in a border of perennials or annuals. They can be set among the shrubs.

Some, as santelinos and lavers, can be used as shrubs where gray would brighten a spot.

A formal herb garden can be a beautiful spot if space and time permit. An herb garden requires more planning and soil prepara-

tion than just digging here and there for a few plants to be put in.

The initial spading or roto-tilling and layout of the formal garden, then filling it with plants takes time, but is well worth the enjoyment the garden would bring for many years.

The most commonly grown herbs require no special care, like a hot, sunny place, ordinary or poor soil. They have few insect and fungus enemies.

A good many, though, are rampant growers, such as the mints, and they should be placed with this in mind, if mixed with other plants. They can soon crowd out less vigorous things.

When transplanting herbs, as with all plants, they should be watered well until established. After they have had time to get going, they will require little water.

Twelve useful and attractive perennial herbs for beginners are suggested:

— Bergamot — *Monarda didyma*, to four feet tall, fragrant, showy, red bracts in summer, good as cut flowers.

— Catmint — *Nepeta mussinii*, to a foot or so. Lavendar-blue flowers all summer. Cats like it, but

not as much as *N. cataria*, which can be very weedy.

— Chive — *Allium schoenoprasum*, one foot tall with lilac-pink flower. An onion-like plant with mild flavor, used in soups and salads, can be potted and grown inside for winter use.

— Feverfew — *Chrysanthemum parthenium*—one to two feet tall, many small "mums" for a long period in summer, white, dried flowers used as medicine.

— Lavender — *Lavendula officinalis*; fragrant, gray shrub-like, purple-blue flower spikes, use in potpourri, sachets, flower arrangements, dried or fresh.

— Lavender Cotton — *Santolina Chamaecyparissus*, one foot or taller, much cut gray foliage, very decorative, "button" flowers are yellow, like tansy but on long stem.

— Majoram — *Origanum onites*, medium tall, reddish cast to leaves, used for flavoring salads, sauces and soups.

— Sage — *Salvia officinalis*, to two feet, has soft gray foliage, or "purple" or "golden" varieties, dried leaves used as pork, poultry, stuffing seasoning.

— Silvermound — *Artemisia schmidtiana* nana, lovely silvery



Visitors at the herb garden at Greenmead, Livonia's historical site are invited to see — sniff — and even "snitch" to help determine what to plant.

mound to over a foot across, very feathery foliage. Decoration only.

— Tansy — *Tanacetum vulgare*, to three feet, dark green, ferny foliage, yellow button-like flowers in corombs. Tender leaves for fish dishes, meat pies and eggs.

— Thyme — *Thymus vulgaris*, low, shrubby, small dark green leaves, for seasoning soups, fish, poultry.

— Yarrow — *Achillea filipendulina*, to four feet tall, divided grayish leaves, flowers golden yellow to five inches across. "Everlasting" when dried.

Some herbs are easily grown from seeds, but a pack of seeds is apt to have too many when you want just a few plants.

Most nurserymen carry some

herbs pot-grown. These can be easily established in your garden. Most farmers' market have plants all spring and summer.

Garden tours are great for getting ideas on how to set up your own herb garden. If you are not familiar with the plants, sometimes seeing them growing helps you decide what you'd like to grow.

Two beautiful herb gardens I'm personally familiar with are open to visitors and well worth a visit.

One is located at Greenmead, Livonia's historical site, at Newburgh and Eight Mile Rd. The other is at Cranbrook at 380 Lone Pine Rd., Bloomfield Hills.

— NANCY DAVIS

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