



# Scripps Miramar Seed Library

**“Grow & Share”**

## Newsletter

### HERBS

**What is the definition of an herb?**

**It is any seed-bearing plant that does not have a woody stem and dies down to the ground after flowering.**

**"The banana plant is the world's largest herb"**

Herbs are the leafy part of the plant that is used for cooking, health purposes and in cosmetics. They can be utilized either fresh or dried.



Herbs add fantastic flavors and colors to any dish or drink. In addition to flavor and color, they each tend to have their own set of health-promoting properties. However, they are not used as main ingredients. For example, spinach is also the green leafy part of a plant but it is not an herb since it is utilized as a main ingredient.

Sometimes, herbs and spices can be confused with each other. The main difference between a spice and an herb lies with what part of the

plant they came from. Any leafy or green part of the plant can be an herb and any other part of the plant can be a spice. For example, cloves are dried buds and cinnamon is the bark of a tree. Spices are used only in the dried form, but herbs can be used either fresh or dried.

Dried herbs are usually stronger flavored than fresh. A general rule is one teaspoon of a dried herb is equal to 4 teaspoons of a fresh herb. When cooking with herbs, take note if the recipe calls for fresh herbs or dried herbs. Some recipes ask for just a sprinkle of herbs on the dish, such as parsley or cilantro.

### Health benefits of herbs

WHO estimates that 60 percent of the world's population and 80 percent in developing countries rely on herbal medicines for their primary healthcare. In 2012, researchers studying dental calculus on the teeth of a 50000-year-old Neanderthal skull found two known medicinal herbs, chamomile and yarrow on the teeth.



As long as humans have inhabited the Earth, we've used herbs for healing, probably from observing animals that do the same

thing. Two major herbal medicinal systems, Ayurvedic (India) and TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) are still in use now and are thousands of years old. Europe has also developed its own system with folk healers treating people with local herbs. Consuming herbs has been found to prevent or manage many health problems. However, fresh herbs often contain higher antioxidant levels compared to processed or dried herbs.

### Growing herbs

Many common herbs grow well in full sun, well-drained soil and dry summer. Almost all herbs grow best in an area that is sunny for at least six hours each day, but several herbs, like parsley or mint, prefer partial shade. The well-drained soil should incorporate 2 to 3 inches of fine pine bark, compost, or leaf mold on sandy soils to improve their moisture retention. Also,



raised beds can further improve drainage. Very few herbs will grow in wet soil, but mint and lemon grass thrive in moist soil. Ground that is very fertile will allow herbs to grow large leaves, but it will not be flavorful. Parsley can be sown in the fall and tender basil planted in late spring. Basil and cilantro seeds can be placed in the garden directly but for mint it is better to use containers as it can spread aggressively. Water herbs thoroughly and then allow the soil to dry out somewhat before watering again. Plants should be watered early enough in the day so leaves can dry before nightfall. Herbs with gray leaves, or those that are sensitive to excessive moisture and humidity, can benefit from a 1- to 2-inch mulch of pea gravel or other stones.

Prune or harvest herbs regularly to promote well shaped and sturdy growth. The best defenses against pests on herbs are proper growing conditions, good sanitation, removal

of weak or infested growth, and regular pruning.

### Know herbs and their use

**Angelica's** leaves, stems, roots, and seeds can all be used. Stems and leaves add flavor to soups and stews. Angelica can be used to combat motion sickness by crushing the leaves and placing them in a netted bag and keeping them in the car. It grows up to 3-7 feet high and needs a damp environment.



**Bee Balm's** leaves and flowers are utilized in several ways. It can be infused in apple cider vinegar to place in salads, used to make a tea that soothes cold and flu and treat indigestion. Bee Balm is a hardy plant that reaches up to 4 feet high and requires evenly moist soil.



**Borage's** leaves (cooked) and flowers are edible and the flower petals especially add color and flavor in salads. The plant has anti-inflammatory properties when consumed regularly. It grows 2-3 feet high, utilizing full sun and well-drained soil.



**Fenugreek's** seeds and leaves can be used in several ways. For example, roasted seeds can be used as a coffee substitute. Fenugreek plant is 10-12 inches high and requires well fertilized soil and less water once the plant establishes itself.



**Turmeric's** roots and leaves are the parts which can be utilized. Powdered turmeric is used in dishes to impart its rich yellow-orange color. Its anti-inflammatory properties, combined as a powder with water, will help to heal wounds. The plant grows 12-24 inches high and it needs well-drained, rich organic soil.



Soil should be evenly moist.

### **Seed Library Pick- Plant-Lemon Balm**



It is a perennial plant in the mint family and native to south-central Europe, the Mediterranean Basin, Iran, but now naturalized elsewhere. The leaves are used as an herb, in tea and as a flavoring. The plant is used to attract bees for honey production. Lemon balm grows in full sun in well drained, fertile soil. You can sow it the late spring or fall. It is self-seeded and can spread everywhere in a garden. The plant reaches at the height of 10-12 inches.

### **Seed Library Pick- Recipe- Rose & Lemon Balm Honey**

#### **You will need**

- Dried rose petals (crushed into small pieces)
- Dried lemon balm leaves (crushed into small pieces)
- Raw runny honey
- Clean, dry, wide mouth jar with lid



**How to make** Half fill the jar with rose petals and lemon balm leaves. Pour over the honey. Stir with a spoon to ensure the petals are all coated and to remove some of the air bubbles. Add more honey if needed to coat all the petals.

Seal the jar with the lid and leave to infuse for 4-6 weeks and then the honey is ready to be eaten. This honey will be last at least a year and can be used in a cup of streaming water or poured over milk pudding.

### **Seed Library Suggestion- Book**

#### **The Garden Apothecary**

Complete with stunning photos and clear step-by-step instructions, this book will allow you to grow plants that have healing properties.

Call no.635.7/COLE



#### **Special Event at Scripps Ranch Library**

#### **"Spring Veggies". A talk by Farmer Roy Wilburn of Poway Gardens**

**Saturday, February 18th at 10 am Community Room**

References: Kaufer, Lanny (2021) "Medicinal Herbs of California". Published by Roman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

Varnier, Collin (2020)"Edible and Medicinal Flora of the West Coast". Published by Heritage House Publishing Company LTD

There are multiple sources available at the Scripps Ranch Library that are not cited here.

We request that you share pictures of your garden and tell us about your experiences, which can be helpful for other gardeners. Also, we invite you to send in your garden related questions and we will answer them in the next newsletter .

This newsletter is composed by Ashu Agarwal & edited by Jeff Lash

For any questions, please contact Matt Beatty (MBeatty@sandiego.gov)

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