

your garden needs...



...culinary herbs and spices

Use packetseeds.com culinary herbs and spices.

Herbs are the aromatic leaves of plants without woody stems that grow in temperate zones. Most of the common herbs are of Mediterranean origin, and thrive in the sun in well-drained soil.

Spices are seasonings obtained from the bark, buds, fruit or flower parts, roots, seeds or stems of various aromatic plants and trees.

Basil: use packetseeds.com red leaf basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) and green leaf basil (*Ocimum basilicum*).



Basil came originally from India where it was used to cleanse and protect houses and temples. Sweet basil is the best flavoured variety. A half-hardy annual, it should be sown under glass in spring for planting out after the frosts. Alternatively, sow where it is to remain in mid- to late-May. Basil needs well-drained soil and a sunny but sheltered position. Either remove the flower buds or cut the leaves before the flower opens. Some foliage should be left on for a second harvest in the autumn.



The flavour is sweet but slightly peppery. It is used extensively in Mediterranean and Greek cooking, blending particularly well with tomato dishes, soups, pasta, risottos and eggs. It also goes well with pork and cheese dishes. There are two leaf coloured forms available: green and red.

Bay: Bay (or laurel) was the symbol of wisdom in ancient Greece and Rome. Its evergreen foliage was made into crowns for celebrities.

A small evergreen tree, bay can reach a height of over 5m (20 ft), but it's frequently grown in tubs and trimmed back to make a neat bush less than 2m (6 feet) high. Propagation is by cuttings taken in late summer and planted out in a cold frame until rooted. Or lower branches can be layered.

Bay leaves, whole or ground, have a concentrated smell and flavour, and should be used sparingly in recipes. Giving warmth and fullness to beef, lamb or chicken casseroles and soups, bay is particularly good with game.

Borage: use packetseeds.com borage (*Borago officinalis*).

Borage is a hardy annual plant, it has long been grown freely in gardens, both for its uses as a herb and for the sake of its flowers, which yield excellent honey. The fresh herb has a cucumber-like fragrance. When steeped in water, it imparts a coolness to it and a faint cucumber flavour, and compounded with lemon and sugar in wine, and water, it makes a refreshing and restorative summer drink.



Caraway: use packetseeds.com [caraway](#) (*Carum carvi*).

Caraway is a biennial, with smooth, furrowed stems growing 45—60cm (18—24 inches) high, bearing finely cut leaves, and umbels of white flowers which blossom in June. It is grown for use as a flavouring in cookery, confectionery and liqueurs. The fruits are laterally compressed, somewhat horny and translucent, slightly curved, and marked with five distinct, pale ridges. They give out a pleasing, aromatic odour when crushed, and have a pleasant taste. The leaves possess similar properties and contain an oil identical to that of the fruit. Tender leaves of young growth in spring can be boiled in soup, to give an aromatic flavour.



Chamomile: use packetseeds.com [German chamomile](#) (*Matricaria chamomilla*).

A tall hardy annual which grows to 60cm (24 inches). Broadcast seed in spring in final position. Prefers a light, dry soil. It can be taken as an infusion for indigestion. Dried flowers can be used in pot pourri.



Chives: use packetseeds.com [chives](#) (*Allium schoenoprasum*).

Chives are the mildest member of the onion and garlic family. They are perennial, will grow in ordinary well-drained soil and can be harvested continually. Ideally, raise them from seed. With their roundish, mauve flower heads they make an attractive border edging but disappear in winter. Water the plants during dry spells, and feed them occasionally. Pot on a few to keep on the kitchen window sill in winter.

Although chives are included in some ranges of dried herbs they are better used fresh. The leaves have a fresh, mild, oniony flavour. Chives look and taste good snipped and sprinkled over creamy soups and potato dishes, or mixed into a salad.



Coriander: use packetseeds.com [coriander](#) (*Coriandrum sativum*).

An annual plant which grows 75—90cm (30—36 inches) tall, coriander makes a very attractive plant with small purple, pink or white flowers and bright green, feathery foliage. It may be sown outdoors in April in well-drained soil and a sunny position.

The globular, sandy-coloured, ribbed seeds begin to ripen about August developing an agreeable aroma. The plant should then be cut down and the seeds shaken off for use.

The young leaves are chopped and used in middle Eastern and vegetable dishes. The seeds can be used ground or whole in savoury dishes.



Dill: use packetseeds.com [Dill](#) (*Anethum graveolens*).

Tender annual plant, flowering from July until September. Up to 120cm (4 feet) in height. Prefers lime rich soils. Sow in rows outdoors April until July. Cut the feathery leaves regularly for salads. Collect seeds when ripe. Excellent complement to salads, vegetables, meat and fish dishes. Do not cook: add to dish shortly before serving. Can also be included in recipes for pickling or souring gherkins.



Fennel: The common variety is not to be confused with finocchio (Florence fennel – a lower growing annual valued mainly for its bulbous base).

Common fennel is a perennial that grows to the height of 120—150cm (4 – 5 feet) – a handsome addition to the border with its bright green stems and fine lacy leaves. The seeds have a faint aroma of aniseed. There is a bronze variety that is very decorative and also suitable for culinary use.

Plants may be bought, but fennel is easily grown from seed sown in spring, and will later produce self-sown seedlings. Stake the tall varieties, or shelter them from the wind.

Fennel is often called the “fish herb”, since its aniseed flavour enhances most kinds of fish. The leaves can be chopped and used to stuff fish, or in salads. The branches can be used in grilling or barbecuing fish or chicken, and the root can be used as a vegetable or in salads. The seeds can be sprinkled on cheese or savoury dishes.

Lavender: use packetseeds.com true lavender (*Lavandula officinalis*).

The plant grows 30—90 cm (1—3 feet high) on a compact, much-branched stem. The flowers are produced in terminal spikes on long stalks. The spikes are composed of florets, each composed of from six to ten flowers. The majority of the oil in the plant is present in the flowers which are a beautiful bluish-violet colour. Besides being grown for the production of this oil, Lavender is widely used in the fresh state as 'bunched Lavender,' and as 'dried Lavender,' the flowers can be used powdered, for pot-pourri.



Lemon balm: use packetseeds.com lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*).

A herbaceous perennial. The root-stock is short, the stem square and branching, grows 30—60cm (1—2 feet high), and has at each joint pairs of leaves which have a fragrant lemon odour when crushed. They also have a distinct lemon taste. The flowers, white or yellowish, are in loose, small bunches from the axils of the leaves and bloom from June to October.



Lovage: use packetseeds.com lovage (*Levisticum officinale*).

It is a hardy perennial and hence is very easy to keep in garden cultivation.

The stems divide towards the top to form opposite whorled branches, which in June and July bear umbels of yellow flowers, similar to those of Fennel or Parsnip, followed by small, extremely aromatic fruits, yellowish-brown in colour, elliptical in shape and curved, with three prominent winged ribs. The odour of the whole plant is very strong. Its taste is warm and aromatic, and it abounds with a yellowish, gummy, resinous juice.



Marjoram: use packetseeds.com Sweet Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*).

Marjoram comes in three main varieties – common marjoram, sweet marjoram and pot marjoram. The last two are best for herb gardens.

Sweet marjoram makes a bushy, grey-leaved sub-shrub up to 90cm (36 inches) high.

Pot marjoram, with bright green leaves grows up to 30cm (12 inches) high and is inclined to spread. All varieties do best in well-conditioned garden soil in a sunny position.

Seeds can be sown under glass in February or March or in shallow drills in the open in April. It's rather slow to germinate, but plants require



little attention once established.

This is a sweet and spicy herb with many uses. It is at its best in Italian style dishes. It goes well with tomatoes and mushrooms, in pizzas or pasta recipes. It should be used sparingly with meat and poultry as its lively aromatic flavour can be a little powerful.

Mint: use packetseeds.com [peppermint](#), *Mentha piperita*.

The many types of mint include spearmint, apples mint and eau de cologne mint; also peppermint the strong flavour of which is used in confection and liqueurs.

Preferring a rich, moist soil and some shade all types are invasive, spreading rapidly by creeping roots. So mint is best confined within a large container, or a bottomless bucket sunk into the soil. Grown in this way, it also makes a nicely shaped clump of foliage. There are many varieties of mint, each with their own particular flavour. Chopped mint mixed with vinegar for mint sauce is a popular accompaniment for lamb, but mint can add interest to potatoes, peas, carrots, fresh fruit salad and apple dishes also.



Parsley: use packetseeds.com [smooth leaf parsley](#) or [curly leaf parsley](#) or [root parsley](#) (*Petroselinum crispum* convar. *crispum*).

Curled garden parsley is the most popular kind; grow it as an annual as the leaves are best in the first year. Sow it in early spring. Give it a moist and partially shaded position. Thin out the seedlings as soon as they large enough to handle.

Other varieties are French parsley with plainer leaves, more strongly flavoured, and Hamburg parsley with plainer leaves grown for its edible root, cooked or grated raw in salads.

Parsley is a very versatile herb. It can be used as a garnish for all kinds of dishes, but when it is included as an ingredient its delicate flavour blends well with eggs and meat. It is particularly good with fish, made into sauces, or in flavoured butters.



Rosemary: Rosemary was traditionally a love token, and formed part of bridal wreaths. As a rinse, it conditions dark hair.

An evergreen perennial, rosemary grows best in a well-drained soil in a dry, sunny border. It can attain a height of 150cm (5 feet) and looks particularly effective growing against a wall. Seeds may be sown in April.

The flavour and aroma of rosemary make it an excellent companion for lamb; the leaves can be used in marinades or rubbed over meats before cooking. Use rosemary sparingly in omelettes and salads, and also in stuffing for roast meats and poultry.

Sage: use packetseeds.com [sage](#) (*Salvia officinalis*).

Sage is noted for its digestive qualities, and sage tea is said to be good for the blood and the nerves. This herb is also used for conditioning the hair, and as a mouthwash to whiten the teeth.

Sage is a woody perennial that grows up to 2 ft in well drained soil and full sun. The violet-blue flowers produced in mid-summer are attractive to bees. There are decorative varieties with red, gold or purple leaves which can also be used for culinary purposes. The plants become leggy after four or five years when they should be replaced by cuttings or seeds sown in the open in April.

Sage is a pungent herb which must be used carefully to balance the flavours of food. It goes well with onion in stuffing for chicken, goose and duck. It combines particu-



larly well with pork or ham and is used in pies and sausages as well as in cheese dishes.

Sorrel: use packetseeds.com sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*).

Rumex acetosa, the Garden Sorrel, is an indigenous English plant. A slender plant about 60cm (24 inches) high, with juicy stems and leaves, and whorled spikes of reddish-green flowers in June and July. The perennial roots run deeply into the ground. The leaves frequently become a beautiful crimson.

As the flowers increase in size, they become a purplish colour. The stamens and pistils are on different plants. The seeds, when ripe, are brown and shining. Sorrel is well known for the acidity of its foliage, which is most marked when the plant is in full season, though in early spring it is almost tasteless.



Summer savory: use packetseeds.com summer savory (*Satureja hortensis*).

Summer Savory is a hardy annual, with slender erect stems about 30cm (12 inches) high. It flowers in July, having small, pale lilac labiate flowers on short stems. Summer Savory is best raised from seeds, sown early in April, in shallow drills, 20–30cm (9–12 inches) apart. Select a sunny situation and thin out the seedlings, when large enough, to 6 inches apart in the rows. It likes a rich, light soil.

The seeds may also be broadcast, when they must be thinned out, the thinned out seedlings being planted in another bed at 6 inches distance from each other and well watered. The seeds are very slow to germinate.

The early spring seedlings may be first topped for fresh use in June. When the plants are in flower, they may be pulled up and dried for winter use.

Savory is added to stuffings, pork pies and sausages as a wholesome seasoning. Fresh sprigs may be boiled with broad beans and green peas, in the same manner as mint. It can also be boiled with dried peas to add extra taste to pea-soup.



Tarragon: use packetseeds.com tarragon (*Artemisia dranunculus*).

Tarragon comes in two varieties – the French and the Russian. French tarragon has a finer flavour. A perennial, it grows about 90cm (36 inches) high and has a slightly feathery appearance. A well-drained light soil is required and a warm, sunny position.

Plant tarragon in late spring or in September. Propagation is by root division or cuttings. Cut down the plants in late autumn and mulch the roots to give winter protection. The flavour of tarragon leaves is best just before the yellow-grey flower clusters appear, in late June and July.

The flavour is bitter-sweet, delicate and is much used in French cuisine. Its chopped leaves are added to Bearnaise and Hollandaise sauces, and go particularly well in chicken and egg dishes. A sprig of tarragon can be left in a bottle of wine vinegar for an aromatic salad dressing.



Thyme: use packetseeds.com thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*).

It is a low-growing perennial that thrives on dry, chalky, stony soil- ideal for pockets in rock gardens. There are upright species growing a few inches high, and creeping varieties which are very good for planting between paving stones where they release their fragrance when trodden on. Cut back upright types in early spring to encourage bushy growth.

Replace your stock every two or three years, when plants become



straggly and less aromatic.

One of the oldest herbs in culinary use, with a sweet and warming flavour and attractive scent. It blends well with many flavours in stuffing for chicken and veal. It is believed to help digestion and goes perfectly with any rich or fatty meat, game or poultry dish. It also complements vegetables like tomatoes, courgettes and aubergines, so can be used liberally in ratatouille.

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References:

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