



# Herbs 101

By

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# Chapter 1 – An Introduction To Herbs

Natural herbs have been in use since the dawn of time. The Chinese have been using these flavorful weeds for everything from spicing up a favorite dish to curing allergies. Common herbs are most known for their culinary uses. There are medicinal applications for herbs as well.

The Native Americans knew the value of an herb. Whether it was to cure a toothache or cure an upset stomach, there was an herb for everything. Some of the best foods are made to taste that way because of an herb.

What would a pumpkin pie be without the herbs. The most popular sausages get their flavoring from natural herbs. Most of them can be grown right in the household garden. People forget the value of an herb until they try to cook without them. Herbs may be an overlooked little plant in the yard, but it is a plant that can pack a punch. They have been for centuries.

While hiking in the Alps two people came across the body of a man whom the hikers thought had fallen and been injured. As it turned out, it was the discovery of the century. The body was that of a man who had lived over 5,000 years ago. He had been caught in the big freeze with the entrance of the ice age. What made this so unique were the things he carried with him. One of these items was a small leather pouch of herbs. The herbs were reputed to be for medicinal purposes.

Herbs have been used for trading in ancient times. Travels to the far east brought wonderful spices like ginger and cinnamon to Europe. Sage was in demand in Asia. From the desire to have these aromatic and medicinal plants came many trade routes. The demand for herbs opened many doors to different cultures.

The early uses of herbs were mainly dedicated to medicine. People discovered certain plants made the body feel better, more relaxed, or in less pain. Chamomile gives a calming effect. Most mints can settle an upset stomach. For the longest time, herbs were the only medicines anyone knew about. Once it was realized that supernatural spirits were not the cause of many illnesses, herbs became more and more important.

With the onset of new medical practices, the use of herbs became less relied upon. In some countries it even became illegal to practice the use of

herbal medicine. Herbs were considered substandard. Many people who had relied on herbs for healing were now being accused of witchcraft.

It was not until the 1960's and 1970's that herbs started making a comeback. The use of herbs once again started to gain popularity. Now people are realizing that many illnesses are better treated with herbs than any other medicines. In fact, when it was discovered that many prescribed medications were based on a natural herb remedy, some people swore off medicines and started using only natural herbs.

Somehow, though, herbs never did leave the cook pot. Whether it was to add flavor to a cake or pie or season a pot of stew, herbs have been in the kitchen forever.

## Chapter 2 – Herbs in the Kitchen

Anyone who has ever done any type of baking or cooking knows that the food just tastes better with seasoning. This can be as simple as adding salt and pepper, or complicated as using a blend of spices for the perfect taste. What is surprising to some people is pepper is an herb.

Pepper is a berry from the Piper Nigrum plant. Black and white pepper are made from the same plant. The un-ripened berries are used for the black pepper while the red, ripe ones are used for the white pepper.

Along with the natural herb, pepper, many other herbs are used to create culinary masterpieces. Nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon are common varieties of herbs used in the kitchen. Sage, oregano, and basil are three more.

As more and more plants were discovered for their pungent flavor, people started making extraordinary dishes. What would a roast beef sandwich be without horseradish? Try making a good breakfast sausage when there is no sage around. Herb bread would just be bread if it were not for the flavorful little buggers.

One of the most beneficial attributes is that herbs have no calories, have no fatty acids, no cholesterol, and generally no bad things at all. They just have a unique taste that wakes the taste buds in all of us.

When using herbs in cooking, it is important to remember a little goes a long way. Too much can actually distract you from the natural flavor of the food. The entire concept of using herbs is to highlight the natural flavors. Too much can overpower the food and result in a ruined meal.

There is even an herb which adds the sweetness of sugar without all the calories. This is an herb called STEVIA. Although this herb cannot be sold as a sweetener for foods, it can be used in place of sugar. One leaf has enough sweetener in it to sweeten a glass of lemonade. You can use this herb in sauces or salad dressings instead of sugar to cut down on the calories.

Many of the meat marinades on the market get their flavoring from natural herbs. You can use dill with lemon for fish. Saffron in your rice is always a good choice. Putting rosemary on a pork roast or lamb results in a mouth watering treat. With so many different herbs that this planet has, there is something for every dish you create.

Having herbs in the kitchen is a wonderful experience for the novice cook to the master chef. With the right blend of herbs you can make meat rubs, soup and stew bases, or even a new flavor of coffee.

## Chapter 3 – Growing an Herb Garden

The thought of walking through a garden on a warm summer day brings back childhood memories once forgotten. To think of walking in an herb garden, with the delicate scents wafting up with each step is something out of a fairy tale. You can create your own fairy tale setting right in the back yard.

There are so many things to consider when you decide to plant an herb garden. The first is location. You need to remember that most of the plants in this garden are going to be used in the kitchen. The best place to put them would be by the kitchen.

It is always best to choose a section in the yard close to the door. You may want to have the fresh herbs available for cooking but easy access is always a key role in how many of them actually make it to the stewing pot. When the herbs are right within walking distance of the kitchen you are more likely to run out and pick a few leaves to use. If you have to go all the way to the back of the yard, you may not feel so inclined to add that particular flavoring to your dish.

You do not need acres of land to have a fantastic herb garden. You can have more than enough space for the most common herbs in a five foot square area. You must remember the fact that herbs tend to spread rapidly when growing. You can start out with five feet and within a few short months have the entire section full.

A sunny location is a good choice for your herb garden. One that gets partial shade in the afternoon is best. Herbs love the sun, but too much can make them wither or sprout up and go to seed quickly. Once an herb goes to seed, it can become woody. However when you do not allow the plant to have the light of the full sun, you can have spindly little plants. This is not what you want in an herb garden.

Along with proper growth is the essential oils that give the herbs their wonderful flavors and aromas. In the full sun the plants are able to develop luscious green foliage and intense oils. The flavors will come bursting out when you use them in the kitchen.

The bottom line to choosing where your garden is going to go is location, location, location. The right one will make all the difference.

You will find that because most natural herbs were once weeds, and in some cases still considered as such, they will grow in almost any soil. You must remember that they are plants and as such must be treated accordingly. You should use a natural fertilizer if you can. The herbs like to have a more neutral type of soil. Just by adding some dead leaf compost and tilling it under when planting can make the herb garden grow better than ever.

The better quality of the soil, the better your herb garden will grow. However, most herbs will grow anywhere. As a matter of fact, you may find they will grow right out of the nice bed you have prepared for them and into the lawn. There is an actual benefit to this; the smell is fantastic when you are mowing the lawn. Just walking past and brushing up against the fragrant leaves releases a wonderful aroma into the air.

The main problem many new gardeners face is what to plant and what to leave out. It is not advisable to try every herb all at once. The best way to enjoy your culinary garden is to choose four or five hardy varieties of an herb you will use in the kitchen. This will allow you to get started with the basics of growing an herb garden. It is a great experience which you will be able to enjoy year 'round.

Some of the more hardy varieties include basil, oregano, and mint. Most herbs are hardy enough to be grown anywhere in the country. There are some which are only going to grow in the more tropical climates. You should check the hardiness zones of the plants you want to grow before you purchase them. This can save you from disappointment.

Growing your herb garden is not hard at all. Most of the herbs tend to themselves.

When you finally decide on a sunny area for the garden, make sure it is tilled up smoothly. The rich dirt can be bolstered with nutrients if you like. A standard garden fertilizer is all you need.

You can either start the plants in the house during the winter, six weeks before the last frost, or you can sow the seeds directly into the ground. You must make sure if you start the seeds in the house, the plants are hardy and can take being transplanted. Some do not like to be moved once they have started growing. The easy varieties, like the mint family, seem to thrive on abuse. It is as though nothing can kill them.

The plants you start in the garden must not be planted until after the last frost is over. The ground must be warm and ready for growing. If you plant

too soon the seeds will only rot and not germinate. The most successful way is to start the seeds indoors. This way there is no chance of the weather turning and having the seeds die.

To start the seeds indoors, it is best to use gardening trays. You can mark each tray with the seed variety you have planted in them. This makes it easy to know which is which. At an early stage they will all look the same. The trays can be purchased in either a self watering variety or you can maintain a constant watering source for them. The herbs are not really hard to grow at all. You just have to have patience.

You will want to use a sterile medium for starting seeds. This can be as simple as a good potting soil. One that is full of sticks and other debris may still hold contaminants. This is not a good potting soil to start the seeds in.

You can use this soil for later use when potting the plants, but do not use it to start your seeds. Some people have had success with it, and some have had major disappointments. It is always safer to just buy a good potting soil with no contaminants.

The soil can be put into the trays for the seeds at about two inches deep. This will allow the new plants to generate a good rooting system. The plant's life is in its roots. You need to make sure the roots will be able to expand.

Watering of a new planting system can be hard. This is why I recommend a self watering system. The soil does not dry out nor does it get too moist. The moisture stays just right for the seeds to germinate.

Some people put the seed trays on heat pads to keep the soil warm. This is not necessary for germination. You should cover the trays with some sort of lid. Many of the trays come with lids. If your tray does not have one you can make one out of plastic wrap. Just make sure to remove the plastic once the plants start appearing.

It can take up to two weeks for some of the herb seeds to start germinating. When they do you will see the little sprouts everywhere. Do not try to thin them at this point. You should, however remove the plastic. One tip you may want to take advantage of is this. The plants were in a warm place while the lid or plastic was on. You may want to remove the lid for a few hours each day for a couple of days to allow the young plants to acclimate.

This will allow the seedlings to get used to the colder air of the house. It will also keep in some of the extra moisture needed by the plants as they grow.

There is no need to fertilize the young plants at this point. That will come soon enough. You will want the plants to get stronger and a little bigger. When the first true leaves have formed, not as they are forming but when they have formed, you can start to weed out the excess plants. Thin the plants to about two inches or more apart. You must remember that natural herbs are actually weeds. The strongest will survive.

The new plants are a little temperamental. You cannot ignore them and expect them to survive. Proper lighting and watering are needed to make them grow. As they get bigger you will want to transplant them into containers so they can grow stronger for the outdoors.

The soil you transplant the new herb seedlings should be light and loose. You will want the roots to be able to breathe and not drown. Proper drainage is necessary when you re-pot the plants, as well. Keep the pots a little on the small side. You want the plants to develop a good rooting system, but you want to force some growth up top as well.

As the plants mature you will want to weather them. This is nothing more than taking them outside for a breath of fresh air. When the weather is warm enough, you can take the new plants outside to soak up the bright sunlight. This will acclimate the plants to the outdoors.

If you do not include this step, the plants can go into shock. Just putting them straight into the garden without any gentle acclimation could cause the young plants to die. They are not used to the colder nights and brighter days. This tends to put them into a state of shock. Plants do not like shock.

Once you have weathered the plants for about a week or so, you can start to transplant them into the garden. Select the spot where you want each herb to grow. I guarantee this is not where they will stay. Natural herbs tend to spread and spread they will. They will spread all over the place if you let them. The nice thing about herbs is the reason you are growing them is to use them. To use herbs you must prune the plant. Pruning and clipping cuts down on the growth and spreading. There is a way to keep your herb garden under control.

You can always grow them in a container. This will make sure growth and spreading do not get out of hand.



## Chapter 4 – Collecting Herbs

One of the best parts about growing an herb garden is being able to use the herbs. From the lemon balm leaf in a glass of tea to the sweet basil in a pot of marinara sauce, herbs can add the most wonderful flavors.

A perfect example of why you would want an herb garden is this. Imagine a hot summer day when the only thing that can cool you off is a frosty glass of ice cold tea. You can brew the tea, pour it over the ice, add a leaf off the stevia plant and one off the lemon balm plant, and you have a wonderful sweetened glass of lemon iced tea.

You must understand something about collecting herbs. You need to do it often to allow the plant to keep growing so well. Once an herb plant has started producing flowers, it will not produce any leaves. Keeping the plant well pruned can keep it from going to flower.

There are three different kinds of herbs:

- 1) Herbaceous; these will die back come winter and grow back in the spring. These herbs do not need to be carefully cut back. You can just chop off what you need and they will continue to grow. It is advisable to at least let one pair of leaves remain. You will definitely do this in the spring to allow the new growth to form. These herbs are also great for container growing, especially the mint varieties.
- 2) Evergreen; these herbs require you prune them at least once a year. You can do it more often, and hopefully you are cutting for the kitchen, but you must also allow some of the plant to keep growing. You will want to remove any old growth so the new growth can benefit from the sunlight and not be crowded.
- 3) Annuals; Annual herbs need to be planted every year. You will not be able to winter these herbs unless you take them indoors. Even when you do take the best care of them possible do not be surprised when they start to die off.

When you do harvest the herbs from your garden, you will want to gather some for fresh use. This allows the plants to keep producing during the growing season. You will want to harvest for the winter later in the year.

When you harvest for the winter months you must make sure you gather all you will need. You will want to make sure before you store the herbs they are dried completely.

## Chapter 5 – Drying Herbs

It is not hard to collect the herbs. A simple snip or cut and you are done. Drying can be a problem when you do not know how to do it. When you remember that an herb is just like any other plant it is easier to understand how to treat them.

You must first gather the herbs you are going to dry. It is best to cut longer stems than many short ones. You are going to hang the herbs upside down in a well ventilated area. You do not want to hang them in bright sunlight. Although the sunlight will make the herbs grow wonderfully, the light can cause the herbs to lose some of their potency when drying.

When you have cut four or five long (8 to 10 inches) stems off your herb plant, you need to shake them off gently. This will ensure there are no insects on the leaves or branches. Strip off any dead or diseased leaves. Make sure you also strip about the last three inches of the stem. You need to tie the cuttings together at the bare end. You can use string or even a rubber band if you wish.

After you have tied the herbs into bundles, insert them into a brown paper bag which you have cut holes into for ventilation. Tie the end of the bag shut with the bare branches sticking out. You can then hang the entire package upside down by the same string you tied everything together with. Keep a close eye on the herbs as they dry. You do not want them to become moldy. Once they are completely dried, you can prepare them for storage. This can take a week or two. Just be patient.

You can also air dry the herbs. Air drying is simply spreading the leaves of the herbs onto screens so the air can penetrate both sides of the leaf. This will allow the herbs to dry uniformly. It is best to use one screen for each type of herb. You do not want to risk drying your peppermint with the oregano. This could result in some rather strange tasting Italian dishes!

Do not make the mistake of thinking you will not use that much. In the summer when you have a good supply of fresh herbs, you may not realize how much of the herb you use. This is because the plant is constantly growing and replenishing your supply.

Dried herbs are stronger than the fresh ones. Fresh herbs contain water. The dried herbs contain a more concentrated essential oil. You will find you do not need to use as much of the dried herbs to get the same flavors.

Yet with the ability to store your own herbs, you might want to make sure you have enough until next spring.

There is a misconception that herbs can be oven dried or heated to force dry them. This is not the best way to dry your herbs. The heat can actually release the essential oils which give the herbs their wonderful aroma and flavor. It makes no sense to use a drying system which will prematurely release the very thing which makes the herbs so desirable.

The important thing to remember from all of this is to make sure the herbs are kept in a warm, dry, and ventilated area while you are waiting for them to dry.

## Chapter 6 – Storing Herbs

When you are storing the herbs you have collected there are many methods to investigate. Some will work better than others. It is all a matter of preference. You can read through and decide what will work for you.

The first method which many people find very simple is freezing. There are two ways to freeze herbs. You can collect the fresh leaves and put them on a cookie sheet in the freezer. When the leaves have been frozen completely, just place them in a storage bag, label the bag with the date and contents, and stick it back in the freezer. Just do not expect the herbs to act or look like fresh when you thaw them. They will still be good for cooking.

Another way to freeze the fresh herbs is one of my favorites. Fill an ice cube tray with the chopped leaves from the herb plant you desire. Fill the tray with water and freeze. When the ice cubes have completely frozen, separate them and put them into freezer bags which you have labeled. You can then take them out of the freezer one cube at a time to add to stews, soups, and other dishes.

I will say that you can store dried herbs in the freezer as well. This can keep them from becoming rancid from being stored too long. This is a good precautionary method in case you did not let the herbs dry long enough. There are times when you think the herbs are dry but you find later they are mildewing in the jars. This means moisture still existed in the leaves. When you freeze the dried herbs, if there is any moisture, it will not affect the herbs.

Many times you will find it is easy to store dried herbs in containers. The best container is one which does not let in light. You can find many apothecary jars with tight fitting lids or even rubber seals. These are the perfect storage containers. With a dark colored jar or bottle the light cannot get to the herbs. Making sure the lid seals properly assures no air can get into the herbs, as well.

Storing herbs in oil is also a good way to preserve the flavor. As long as the oil stays fresh you can keep the herbs. Make sure the leaves are dry and insert into an oil filled jar. This will preserve the flavor. If the oil goes bad, which usually happens in six months or so, the herbs must be disposed of. One of the benefits of preserving the herbs in the oil is you will wind up with an herbal oil which is excellent in cooking.

## Chapter 7 – Adding Herbs to the Cook Pot

Boiling water can be a challenge to the beginning cook. Add some herbs to that pot of water and you have the basis for a great soup. Any dish can be enhanced with the use of herbs. Their natural fragrance and flavor just add that perfect blend to make a meal complete.

Herbs like oregano and basil are the base of many Italian dishes. Cilantro and Cumin are what make Mexican dishes taste so authentic. More exotic spices like allspice and ginger can add beauty to the kitchen as well as tasteful treats to the mouth.

There is a difference between using fresh and dried herbs in cooking. The fresh herbs add a delicate flavor. The essential oil is not as concentrated as it is in the dried herbs. The general rule of thumb when using dried herbs is 1 teaspoon dried to 1 tablespoon fresh herbs.

### *Here are some herbs and their uses in cooking*

NAME	USE	TYPE
Angelica	Jellies, Drinks, Candies	Biennial
Basil	Sauces, Casseroles, Salads	Annual
Bay Laure	Soups, Sauces, Seafood	Annual (unless indoors)
Chives	Salads, Soups, Cheeses, Eggs	Perennial
Dill	Soups, Salads, Sauces	Annual
Fennel	Meats, Baking, Fish, Sausage	Annual
Lemon Balm	Salads, Teas, Sauces	Perennial
Marjoram	Soups, Sauces, Vegetables	Annual
Mint(s)	Teas, Jellies, Candies	Perennial
Oregano	Italian foods, Sauces	Perennial
Parsley	Salads, Garnish, Sauces	Annual
Rosemary	Meats, Sauces, Lamb	Annual
Sage	Sausages, Fish, Casseroles	Perennial
Savory	Stuffings	Perennial (annual in cold)
Stevia	Beverages, Sauces, Soups	Perennial
Tarragon	Salads, Fish, Meats	Perennial
Thyme	Stuffings, Soups, Meats	Perennial
Verbena (lemon)	Stir fries, Teas	Annual

Do not limit yourself to this list. Experiment, discover, experience!

## Chapter 8 – Homemade Herbal Mixtures

You can blend herbs together to make many different fragrances and flavors. Some of the most popular seem to almost compliment each other as well as the food we put them in.

For some of us, natural is the way to go. With an endless supply of fresh herbs, which you can dry, there is no end to the mixes you can make for dips and salsas, or spreads and appetizers. I have included some of my favorites to give you an idea of what you can do with the herbs you grow.

### Taco Seasoning

2 teaspoons beef or chicken bouillon (use powder or granules)

4 teaspoons cornstarch

1/4 cup dried onion flakes

4 tablespoons chili powder

3 teaspoons ground cumin

3 teaspoons dried garlic flakes

2 teaspoons dried hot pepper flakes (optional)

1-1/2 teaspoons dried oregano

Mix this all together. Store in a jar or storage bag until ready for use. Three tablespoons of this mixture added to one pound of ground beef plus one cup of water. Simmer until desired consistency. Salt and Pepper to taste.

### Pumpkin Pie Spice

5 T. ground cinnamon

4 t. ground ginger

2 t. ground cloves

2 t. ground nutmeg

2 t. ground allspice

Use this for making pumpkin pies when ever it calls for pumpkin pie spice. Two teaspoons are sufficient for each pie.

### Oriental Five Spice

1 tsp ground pepper

1 tsp ground cloves

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp ginger

1 tsp ground fennel

This is the main spice used in many oriental dishes. I use it in all my stir fry meals.

There are many dishes you can make yourself instead of buying the boxed version. Fresher is better every time. When you taste the recipe which you have made with your own natural herbs, you may never want to use the boxed stuff again.

One of the favorites for the whole family is an herb rice side dish. This is extremely easy to make. You just need to know the components. Well, here they are.

### **Herbal Rice Side Dish**

1 lb long grain rice (I like half wild rice or brown rice)

1 Tablespoon dried tarragon

1 Tablespoon ground celery

1 Tablespoon dried chives

1/3 cup dried minced onion

1/3 cup dried parsley

salt and pepper to taste

Mix all together and store in an airtight jar.

Bring 1 1/3 cup water to a boil. Add 1/2 cup rice mixture to boiling water. Simmer for 20 minutes. Fluff with a fork and serve.

This recipe is for making your own blend for Italian dishes.

### **Italian Seasoning**

4 Tablespoons oregano

4 Tablespoons marjoram

4 Tablespoons thyme

4 Tablespoons basil

2 Tablespoons rosemary

2 Tablespoons savory

Mix well and use as a seasoning in your pasta sauces. This is also great sprinkled on a pasta and tossed with a little virgin olive oil. You can make it a meal by adding 1 pound browned Italian sausage, 1 cup Parmesan cheese, and sauteed onions and green peppers. Kids love this combination. Make it a treat by adding pepperoni slices.

## Chapter 9 – Great Sources for Seeds and Plants

There are some great resources for buying your herb seeds on line or by mail. Some of these companies also have starter plants you can order during seasonal weather. These are companies which have been in business for many years. Their reputation has been built on supplying only the best herbs and plants to the customer. You can rest assured you will be completely satisfied with what you order from these companies.

### [RICHTERS HERB SPECIALISTS](#)

This company has been in business since 1969. They specialize in herbs. Some of them are very hard to find. The fantastic thing about their catalog is it has uses for the herbs they sell. You can order plant plugs from this company, as well. I have personally ordered from them and have never had any problems. You can get carried away by the selection Richter's offers. There are also growing supplies and some awesome books available too.

### [JOHNNY'S SELECTED SEEDS](#)

This is another very good company. They offer a wonderful variety of seeds for the home gardener. Johnny's also caters to the commercial grower. They do carry a line of organic products for the garden. They do carry a good supply of seed starter supplies.

### [SAND MOUNTAIN HERBS](#)

Sand Mountain offers an extensive list of herbs both for cooking and medicinal use. The list is long and covers everything. If you want a wide variety to choose from, then Sand Mountain is the place to go.

### [THE THYME GARDEN HERB COMPANY](#)

This company has one of the largest selections of herbs that I have ever seen besides Richter's. You can find the descriptions of the plants, the growing season, and the uses for all the herbs they carry. The catalog is full of information for the home grower. This is actually a wonderful catalog for the beginner herbalist.

## Chapter 10 – Resources For Dried Herbs

There are times when the conditions we live in are just not right for growing every herb. This can cause for some disappointment but there is a solution. Many companies offer a wide variety of dried herbs to further enjoy your culinary experience.

You can order in bulk from some of the companies listed. Most of these companies also offer a variety of medicinal herbs as well as essential oils. There is a great demand for the herbs because of the herbal remedies now being made known to the public. People are finding herbs can replace some over the counter medications and are considered much safer than the actual medicines.

Here are just a few of the companies which offer quality dried herbs.

### [SAN FRANCISCO HERB COMPANY](#)

Established in 1973, this company is the leader in the industry for their selection of dried herbs. San Francisco Herb offers herbs for culinary, potpourri, and medicinal use. They have loose teas and packaged. There are spice blends for cooking, pickling, barbecuing, and all sorts of culinary experiences.

### [MONTEREY BAY SPICE COMPANY](#)

You can order bulk spices from Monterey Bay. There are supplies for potpourri as well. You can find many different teas and spices in the pages of their catalog. Among other things, this company also has storage jars to keep your dried herbs fresh.

### [SPICE MASTER](#)

This company offers herbs and spices from all around the world. They have seasonings and blends for every culinary taste. You can order anything from allspice to vanilla pods. The selection is actually a little overwhelming. If you cannot find it here, you most likely will not find it at all.

# Chapter 11 – The Herbal Medicine Cabinet

No book on herbs would be complete without looking at some of the herbal remedies which are being used today. Many people are finding traditional medicines less favorable to the herbal remedies being offered. There are fewer allergic reactions. Herbal medicines have fewer, if any, side affects. There are even some doctors who are prescribing herbal remedies when other medications just are not working.

**There is a strong warning which goes with this information. This information is for general reading and knowledge only. This is in no way presented as medical fact. Under no circumstances should any person add any of the herbal remedies described in this chapter into their diet without first consulting their physician. Women who are pregnant or nursing and small children should never use any type of herbal remedies unless specifically prescribed by their doctor.**

There are all types of old wives tales about herbs that cured coughs and colds. Some people will talk about Grandma's tonic that cured what ailed them. These are the herbal remedies that many people still use today. Things like jewel weed to help relieve poison ivy or rose hips to add vitamin C are simple remedies that have been used for years.

There are many herbs which have some powerful healing properties. These herbs can help with allergies, rashes, and other ailments. Some of the herbs you find growing in the ditches and even in your own back yard can be useful for treating common problems like coughs, bee stings, and sore muscles.

There is always the possibility of an allergic reaction to any form of medication, whether prescribed, over the counter, or even natural herbs. This is why it is always important to speak with a medical professional before you decide to try any type of self medication with natural herbs. Just as some people are allergic to things like milk and strawberries, someone could be just as allergic to valerian or burdock.

In defense of the natural herb remedies, some of them seem to work better than the prescribed medications. Clove oil can relieve a toothache as well as any gel you can buy. Chamomile tea works wonders as a sleep aid. Peppermint can help with heart burn better than some anti-acids. When you start researching herbal remedies you may be surprised what these little weeds can do for your health.

Here are common herbs and what illnesses they can help.

Allspice	Mouthwash, pain relief
Anise	Seeds boiled and added to honey to relieve cough
Basil (pregnant women avoid)	Tea for migraines. Douche for yeast infection.
Caraway	Relieves menstrual cramps, promotes menstruation
Cayenne Pepper	Relieves arthritis pain (can drop your sugar level)
Celery	Sedative, hypertension, kidneys
Chicory	Dissolves gallstones, cleans the liver
Cilantro	Prevents food poisoning
Clove	Toothaches, helps curb alcoholism
Dill	Insomnia
Fennel	Bad Breath
Garlic	Antibiotic
Ginger	Thins the blood
Horseradish	Chest congestion, sore muscles
Licorice	Balances the nervous system (long term use hurts liver)
Oregano	Fever reducer
Mint	Heartburn, stomach aches
Mustard	Sprains
Nutmeg	Indigestion
Parsley	Bad Breath
Pepper	Fever Reducer, toothaches
Rosemary	Anti-oxidant
Sage	Insect bites, stings
Tarragon	Insomnia, depression
Thyme	Antibiotic
Tumeric	Anti-oxidant

Although these herbs are listed as helping with the ailments, any use should first be analyzed by your physician.

## Chapter 12 – Summary

There are many herbs growing all over the world. Whether you call them weeds or herbs, the plants are everywhere. These versatile wonders are used for everything from beautifying the landscape to accenting a meal. You will find herbs on drugstore shelves, listed as herbal remedies. There is no end to their use.

When you are in the garden, the anxiety and stress of the day seem to melt away. There is no time for phone calls or car pools. It is a time to relax and enjoy nature. The smell of the natural herbs floating in the air is enough to make your mind wander to faraway lands. You can create an entire paradise with the herbs you plant in the garden.

Herbs do not need to be contained in one section of the garden, either. You can plant such herbs as echinacea and calendula right in the flower beds. Black cohosh makes a fantastic backdrop to some of the other flowering herbs.

It is a joy to be able to walk outside and pull off a sprig of mint to chew on, or clip fresh basil for a truly awesome pesto sauce. Knowing you have an entire spice shelf at your disposal can make you become a more creative chef. You may find certain herbs are just naturally able to blend together, such as cloves and cinnamon or rosemary and oregano.

As you become more familiar with the herbs and the flavors they can add to your dishes, you will become inclined to use them. You will also want to add some new varieties to the garden. Knowing there is an herb for every dish, even cakes and cookies, can make you want more of the aromatic plants.

You will find yourself being willing to try new recipes just to experiment with the herbs. The freshness in taste will show in every dish you create. You will be complimented on the blend of seasonings you have added.

Whether you decide to plant an herb garden for the simple joy of it or because you want to have the spices on hand, the effort will pay off. You can even pick the fresh herbs and dry them for gifts. There is no end to the creative ways herbs will influence your lifestyle.

## Chapter 13 – Resources

I have included some resources on the Internet for further research and reading. I hope you will enjoy the simple pleasure growing herbs can give you.

[The Herb Society of America](#)

[American Spice Trade Association](#)

[Henriette's Herbal Homepage](#)

[American Herb Association](#)

[Cooking With Herbs](#)

[Culinary Herbs](#)

These websites offer more insight to the wonderful world of herbs and their uses. You can find recipes, pictures, and even some of the folk lore associated with herbs. This is by no means the absolute authoritative list of the use of herbs. There are thousands of books available at the local library on herbs, culinary plants, and herb gardening.

I suggest you research more about the benefits of growing your own herbs in your back yard. I can not express enough the joy and satisfaction you will get when you can walk out and smell the aroma these wonderful plants offer. The sense of relaxation and peace can become quite addictive when you start growing and using your herbs.

## Chapter 14 – Sample Recipes

## Pesto

2 cups fresh Basil leaves  
½ cup fresh Parmesan (grated)  
½ cup virgin olive oil  
1/3 cup pine nuts  
3 cloves garlic  
salt and pepper to taste

Add basil and pine nuts to processor and pulse. Add the garlic and pulse once again. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while blending. Add the Parmesan cheese and blend until smooth. Add the salt and pepper to taste. Serve over hot pasta.

It is easiest to prepare this in a food processor. You can use a regular blender, however you may need to process longer.

## Cajun Spice

1/4 pound kosher salt  
1/2 cup chili powder  
1/2 cup paprika  
2 Tbsp onion powder  
1/3 tsp cumin  
3/4 tsp cayenne pepper  
1-1/2 Tbsp dried thyme  
2 Tbsp coarsely ground black pepper  
2 Tbsp dried basil  
2 Tbsp dried oregano  
2 Tbsp ground coriander  
1/2 tsp white pepper

Blend all the ingredients together. Store in an air tight jar or container. This is the recipe you would use to blacken fish or other meats.

## Perfect Salt Substitute

1 Tbsp ground cayenne pepper  
1 Tbsp garlic powder  
1 Tbsp onion powder  
1 tsp dried basil  
1 tsp dried oregano  
1 tsp dried thyme  
1 tsp dried parsley flakes  
1 tsp dried savory  
1 tsp ground mace  
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper  
1 tsp dried sage  
1 tsp dried marjoram  
1 tsp ground dried grated lemon peel  
Mix until well blended. Use as you would any seasoning salt.