

Herb Gardening in Southern Florida

Herbs are traditionally used for culinary and medicinal purposes, fragrance and tea. Extension Agent Debra Levulis recalls how herbs were commonly used in her family. “Growing up, my mother had a dedicated drawer in our kitchen with every variety of canned herbs, and my mother-in-law would always serve iced tea garnished with her home grown peppermint leaves.”

Herbs are wonderful in a patio garden because they are not only beautiful and useful, but they are also fragrant as you brush across them. Winter in South Florida is the best time of the year to grow herbs. Herbs grow well when the weather is sunny, less humid and cooler, which matches their native Mediterranean roots. Select a sunny spot, plant in professional potting soil and fertilize with slow release pelletized osmocote or dynamite containing micro nutrients such as iron. Water herbs thoroughly until the water comes out of the holes at the bottom of the container, repeat, and do not let the water sit in the saucer for very long. Dump excess water out of the saucer to avoid root rot.

There are many easy-to-grow herbs that you can pick fresh whenever you need them. Culinary herbs include basil, parsley, oregano, rosemary, mint and sage. Fragrance and potpourri herbs include patchouli, sage, lemon verbena and scented geranium. Teas can be made from chamomile, fennel, lemon balm and mint. Medicinal herbs include echinacea, chamomile, aloe and St. Johns wort.

To see herbs growing in a garden setting, stop by Mounts Botanical Garden located next to the Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service, 531 North Military Trail, West Palm Beach. The garden visiting hours are Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. If you have any plant questions, call a Master Gardener Volunteer at 233-1750, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Many herbs grow very well in pots that can be conveniently located near your kitchen.

If you want to see and smell some herbs before planting, visit the herb garden at Mounts Botanical Garden.

