



**NEW GARDEN  
LANDSCAPING & NURSERY**

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# A "Potpourri" of Herbal Ideas

Herbs are among the easiest plants to grow. They are not finicky about the type of soil they are planted in. In fact, they'd almost always prefer a somewhat poorer soil. All most ask is a sunny spot with good drainage.

Herbs come in all shapes and sizes, with many different flavors and fragrances. While most are grown for use in the kitchen, some are planted just for their form or fragrance. You can make herbal oils and vinegars, potpourris, dried herbal wreaths, seasonings, bath oils . . . well, the list goes on and on.

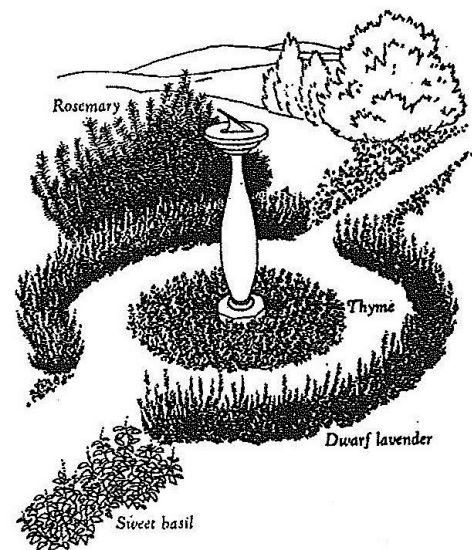
Perhaps one problem with herbs today is that there is SO MUCH information available. If you're new to herbs, it's can be a little bit intimidating to look at the number of books about herbs; you may to think that if there's that much to know, herbs must be complicated. Well, they're not! Jump in with a few plants now, or go 'whole hog' with a theme garden.

What we've tried to do at New Garden with our herbal handouts is to give you very concise information about a pretty wide range of herbs that grow well in our area . . . and to provide you with some ideas to serve as a jumping off point. So don't hesitate! Most herbs are equally happy planted in fall or spring, so don't wait to enjoy their delights!

Now, as far as design goes, there are as many options as there are gardeners. For some reason — perhaps because herbs have such wonderfully contrasting shapes and colors — they seem to look their prettiest when planted in some sort of "order". Some folks use a wagon wheel, with the spokes separating the types of herbs. Other use old wooden ladders, with the rungs as dividers. Many people grow complicated knot gardens, intertwining plants into elaborate patterns. But guess what: your herbs won't care who they're planted next to, so have fun!

What follows are a few ideas for "theme gardens" that make it especially easy and enjoyable to get into herbs. Since most herb gardens take little space (even pots on a patio or deck will do just fine for many), it seems a shame not to try more than one garden. And remember to put them where you'll pass by often, so you can enjoy the "scentsations" of your plants. Since many also attract butterflies and bees, you'll have the added enjoyment of wildlife nearby.

Turn the page for some great ideas!



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# A “Potpourri” of Herbal Ideas cont.

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## **A SALAD GARDEN**

Various lettuces (oak leaf, red salad bowl, leaf, head), endive, chicory, chickweed, arugula, orach, chives (leaves and flowers), nasturtium (tasty, peppery flowers), roses (please, none fed or sprayed with systemics), violets, true geraniums, calendulas, borage (great flowers), upland cress, pansies, lavender, rosemary, pinks, mint, parsley, salad burnet (cucumber-like taste), thyme and lemon thyme, fennel (bronze, green, Florence), dill, marjoram, winter tarragon, and the many sorts of basil. You can add the other veggies your family likes — radishes, carrots, lovage as a celery substitute, tomatoes and cucumbers in all their varieties, squash, zucchini, onions, garlic, and cabbages. Special Trick: if you have picky eaters who resist vegetables, try getting them to eat what you’ve grown in your family garden. The emotional involvement in the plants seems to make all the difference in the world!

## **A LIQUEUR GARDEN**

Most of the more famous liqueurs have an herbal basis, so it's fun to grow the plants used in them. While the formulas for the most famous drinks are closely guarded secrets, many recipe books can help you approximate the flavor of the original. Some herbs to try are angelica (likes deep, shady, moist locations in our climate), anise, lemon balm, caraway, coriander, fennel, hyssop, various mints, sweet cicely, sweet woodruff, tansy, thyme, violets, and wormwood.

## **A LITERARY GARDEN**

The world of books is full of the world of herbs: the Bible, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and many others (including modern mysteries). These are great fun plant a garden using the plants mentioned in your favorite books, including quotes or references on your herb labels. A Biblical garden might include figs, grapes, olives (in a tub), pomegranates, rue, wormwood, rosemary, Christmas and Easter roses, dogwood, redbud, and (believe it or not) at least 130 more! Unfortunately, many plants mentioned in religious works do not grow in North Carolina . . . or we’ve lost their exact identity because of the years of history and the changes in the way we name plants now (using Latin “binomial nomenclature”). Shakespeare provides more mentions of herbs than you can shake a stick at, and his references can create the inspiration for a terrific garden.



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“Where your imagination takes root”

# A “Potpourri” of Herbal Ideas cont.

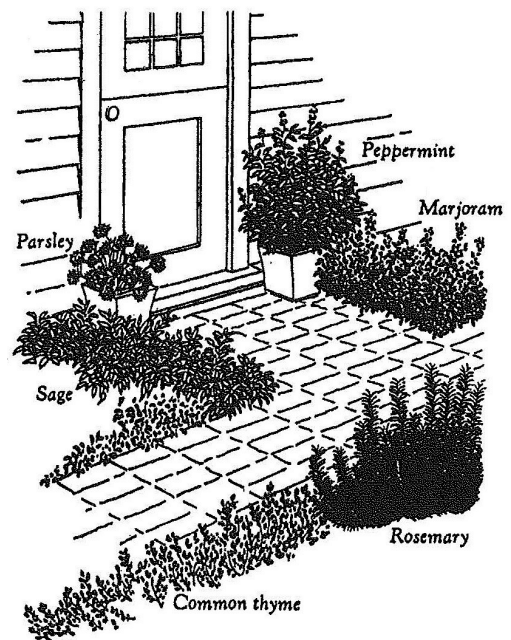
## A FRAGRANCE GARDEN

Now that the whole world seems to have hopped on the "aromatherapy" bandwagon, long-time herb-growers are just smiling to see that people now widely accept what they've known all along: herbs and their fragrances can have a powerful influence on the way we feel. Herbs can be calming (lavender), rejuvenating (rosemary), and refreshing (mint). Anyone who's watched a cat get "high" from a catnip-filled sock can understand just how powerful herbs can be. Potpourris can be used throughout the house, in whatever fragrance combination you want to develop. Colorful dried flowers help add visual interest to your potpourri, too, but are not essential. A few ideas: basil, bayberry, bergamot, salad burnet, ornamental catnip, chamomile, costmary, heliotrope, hyssop, jasmine, lavender, lemon balm, lemon verbena, lily of the valley, marjoram, mint, oregano, orris root iris, pennyroyal, peony, roses, rosemary, sage, savory, scented geraniums, soapwort, southern wood, sweet flag, sweet woodruff, tansy, tarragon, thyme, valerian, violet, and yarrow.

## A MEDICINAL GARDEN

There's a world of medical lore involving the uses of herbs, much of it going back before the origins of modern-day medicine. With today's increased emphasis on holistic medicine, herbal remedies are becoming more prominent. In addition, herbally-based beauty products, like toners and cleansers, are gaining popularity in the cosmetics markets today. Herbal remedies can be in the form of infusions (where you soak the leaves or flowers), teas, or consumption of the actual leaves. Horehound drops are soothing for a cough, valerian (actually sort of a forerunner of Valium) can help relax you at bedtime, and chamomile has long been known for its healing properties (remember Peter Rabbit and his upset tummy?).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We're going to stay away from specific recommendations for medicinal uses for herbs. Very few have been shown to be harmful, but some, like comfrey, may cause liver damage if too much is consumed. Others have not been tested on children to determine correct dosages. If you're interested in medicinal herbs, we suggest you read a well-documented reference book carefully, and proceed with a certain amount of caution, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or have any specific health problems, like heart disease or allergies.



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# A “Potpourri” of Herbal Ideas cont.

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## **A TEA GARDEN**

Okay, these herbs have been found perfectly safe for use in making teas. Our one warning is to go easy: remember, with the exception of gardening, we should do all things in moderation! Try bergamot, borage, catnip, chamomile, dill, fennel, hibiscus, horehound, lemon balm, lemon verbena, lovage, marjoram, mint, parsley, rose, rosemary, sage, sarsaparilla, sassafras (grows wild here), strawberry, blackberry, sweet woodruff, thyme, wintergreen, and violet.

## **A CULINARY GARDEN**

Wow! If you can grow it, you can probably find some culinary use for it. The list below is not inclusive (bear in mind that the thyme family contains more than 400 varieties, and there are scads and scads of sages and basil, as well), but should give you a few clues. Try anise, basil, bay trees, borage, salad burnet, caraway, chervil, chives, coriander, cumin, dill, garlic, horehound, horseradish, leek, lovage, marjoram, mints, oreganos, and of course, parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme. Knock your socks off! There are few things in life more delightful than stepping outside your back door to pick fresh herbs for tonight's grilled fish or chicken. Cooking comes alive!



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