

Growing, Preserving and Storing Garden Fresh Herbs



Growing garden fresh herbs in our backyard has been one of the more rewarding activities on the homestead. Use fresh herbs in your homestead cooking. Add them to a sauce, recipe or dessert. Growing herbs also gives you quick access to the healing properties of the plants. Tinctures, salves, and extracts can be made in a few hours to a few weeks, when growing garden fresh herbs.

Planting Herbs

I have planted my garden fresh herbs in containers the last few years. As the weather starts getting chilly, I can pick up the containers and put them in a warmer location for fall. Last year, quite a few of my containers survived the winter and continued through to this spring and summer. Last year,

during the summer, I had the boxes and containers on our deck where they received part sun and part shade throughout the day. I checked for moisture frequently during the week and watered when the soil was dry or if they herbs were wilting. I watched the basil and sage, in particular and they let me know when to water. The only other maintenance was picking off dead pieces or straggly pieces and pinching off some growth now and then. The basil and marjoram needed more shade than the others, so they were moved into the screen porch and did much better there.



Using the Garden Fresh Herbs

Garden fresh herbs are always best! The softer herbs like basil, parsley, and cilantro can be stood up in a glass with a couple of inches of water. Keep at room temperature. Fresh herbs will last 3 to 7 days. Do not use if leaves are turning brown or if mold appears.

Chives, Rosemary, and Thyme are best kept fresh in the refrigerator. Wrap loosely in plastic wrap, maybe add a crumpled piece of paper towel to keep moisture away. Store on the door portion of the refrigerator where the temperature is warmer. Rinse before using in cooking.



Preserving Garden Fresh Herbs for Later

I used a few methods to use and preserve my herbs for cooking.

Air Drying

Drying herbs can be accomplished in a few ways.

Tie the stems together and hang upside down in a cool dry area. Let air dry.

Microwave method

Microwave herbs between layers of paper towels using 30 second intervals. Basil is one herb that particularly lends itself to microwave drying.

Using an Electric Dehydrator.

Store dried herbs in air tight jars, containers, or plastic bags.

Freezing

Freezing is also an option for storing herbs for later use. Lay the herb leaves in a single layer on a baking sheet and freeze. When frozen, store in plastic bags or freezer containers in the freezer.

Another option – freeze in ice cube trays in olive oil. When frozen, remove from trays and store in bags in the freezer.

When using your stored garden fresh herbs, remember that drying concentrates the flavors. Use 1/4 to 1/3 less.

Herb Categories



Did you know that there are some general classifications for herbs? Some are referred to as culinary and others are in a category called medicinal. Growing garden fresh herbs gives

you access to a medical and culinary garden right in your back yard.

Culinary Herbs

Culinary herbs are used as food flavoring and are usually added to food during the later part of the cooking process, for best flavor. Some of the common herbs used in cooking include basil, mint, rosemary, oregano, thyme, cilantro, parsley, chives, dill, sage, tarragon, and marjoram.

Medicinal Herbs

The herbs with medicinal properties include, basil, chamomile, echinacea, feverfew, lavender, lemon balm, parsley, peppermint, rosemary, sage/salvia, thyme, marjoram. As you can see, there are some herbs that are in both categories.

Growing garden fresh herbs will not only add healthy nutrition and flavor to your cooking, it will add beauty to your garden and feed the bees, too. The herbs will be available all winter if you use these methods to preserve and store your garden fresh harvest.

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[Healing Herbs for the Homesteaders Garden](#) by MomPrepares

[Preserving the Harvest – Drying Herbs and Greens](#) by Little Sprouts Learning

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