

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR HERBS

Perennial herbs are those that are cold hardy during our normal winters. You can prune up to 1/3 of shrubby perennials in late spring if necessary and again after blooms fade. Most perennial herbs prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Do not overwater or over fertilize!

- **Fennel** Harvest seeds as soon as the flowers turn brown, otherwise they will replant itself.
- **Oregano** is one of the more robust winter herbs, easily withstanding winter frost but liking full sun. Harvest (ie. trim) often just before flowers bloom. You can cut back a third of the plant in the spring to rejuvenate. Italian oregano is not as hardy as Greek oregano.
- **Rosemary** likes full sun. Tip prune or cut out oldest woody stems (if plant gets too large) to the ground. You may have to mulch in the winter.
- **Thyme** is the hardiest of all the herbs, as long as you give it well-drained soil. Trim regularly to keep compact.
- **Sage** Pinch off sage leaves as needed and cut back top third to keep the plant bushier. Growth tends to slow down and leaves get smaller in the fall. Watch for powdery mildew.

Annual herbs have a lifespan of a year. Most prefer sun and more water and a richer soil than perennials. To prolong productivity, keep trimmed to prevent flowering. If you want volunteer seedlings, allow flower heads to form. Most annuals can be harvested from the base of the plant or cut back to about 4" from the base.

- **Basil** Pinch back what you need. You can trim a third off the top of your basil, but leave at least two sets of leaves on the bottom of the plant.
- **Parsley** is a biennial, meaning it will grow for one season and in the following season it will produce flowers and then seeds. Some gardeners feel that the second season's parsley is not as flavorful as the first so they grow it as an annual. Can be grown in part shade. Do not let the plant dry out completely.
- **Cilantro** Grows rapidly so you can pinch stalk and all. Goes to seed in hot weather so successive plantings are a good idea. If you let cilantro flower it will likely reseed itself for next year.
- **Dill** leaves can be used at anytime. Cut the plant down to an inch of its base as soon as there is any sign of the flower heads developing. If you want to use the seed, let flowers form and scatter some for next year's plants. Keep on the dry side.

NOTE: The best time to harvest herbs is in the morning after the dew has dried. This is when the volatile oils are freshest; ie. a more flavorful herb! Remember, herbs grown in containers require more water and fertilizer than those planted in the ground.