Growing Herbs

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Herbs are easy to grow and are very prolific. Some Herbs are Annuals, others are Perennial and still others are grown from bulbs. I tend to grow the annuals in my vegetable garden and the perennials in the flower gardens. Start them 4-6 weeks before you plant them outside. If you use seeds to grow your herbs, you can get a very wide variety of each type of herb. For example, one seed catalogue has over 16 types of Basil. Herb plants are also available at many garden centres. Herbs like lots of sun and well-drained soil.

To start your seeds, it is best to use seed starting soil. Garden soil is too heavy. It must be sterile to prevent any disease. The containers must be clean and thoroughly washed. You can use plastic cups or containers. Label the containers so you will know what seeds you have planted in which container. It is amazing how parsley and cilantro look so much alike. I like to use a shallow container. Press the seeds into the soil and cover with a little soil. Check your seed packet to determine how much it should be covered. Cover the planted containers with plastic wrap. Set the container in a warm place to germinate. The top of the refrigerator or a heating pad underneath are good spots. Once your seeds germinate, they will need light. This can be in a bright sunny window or under a grow lamp. Fertilizing is not necessary until the seeds have geminated. Once the risk of frost has passed and your garden soil has warmed, plant your seedlings outside.

The following provides some tips on growing and preserving my favourite herbs.

Basil (A) grows easily from seed. Use your basil all season long. The more you use it, the better it grows. Basil can be dried but will turn black, much like basil you buy at the grocery store. Freeze or make into a Pesto and freeze. I tend to store my pesto in small canning jars to keep the smell from going into my freezer.

Chives (P) can grow from seed or divide from an existing clump. Cut back to the ground when the leaves turn brown. Chop into short pieces and dry in hydrator or on a screen.

Cilantro (A) or Coriander Leaves are cilantro and seeds are coriander. Grows easily from seed. Freeze leaves. Dry seeds when ready. Use seed whole in pickles or ground in dishes.

Dill (A) grows easily from seed. Dry.

Garlic (Bulb) plant bulbs in October. Harvest in July when about half the leaves have died down. Leave in the sun for a few days to mature. Hang bulbs to dry or use the freezer approach. No oil is necessary.

Mint (P) BEWARE—Grow in a container as this spreads wildly. Dry or Freeze.

Oregano (P) grows from seed or buy a plant. Drying is best for this herb.