

Herbs: A Kitchen Garden You Will Actually Use

Choose three herbs you already cook with. A thriving collection of plants you never harvest is less useful than one pot you clip every week.

Separate herbs by their needs

Basil belongs in warm weather. Cilantro is more comfortable in cool conditions and may bolt quickly in heat. Mint spreads aggressively, so give it a separate container. Rosemary and thyme prefer good drainage; do not assume every herb wants the same watering routine. Perennial survival depends on your winter climate and the variety.

Make a cooking-first shopping list

Write three meals you make often, then the herbs used in them. For example, choose basil for pasta, parsley for salads and thyme for roasted vegetables. Buy a small number of healthy plants rather than a mixed planter with incompatible needs. Check mature size before combining plants.

Set up pots properly

Use containers with drainage holes and suitable potting mix. Place them where you can water and harvest easily. Most culinary herbs need a bright, sunny position; a dim kitchen windowsill is not automatically a growing space. Check each plant's requirements. Do not leave pots standing in collected water.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Harvest as part of maintenance

Clip a modest amount regularly while leaving enough foliage for continued growth. Learn where your chosen herb produces new shoots before making heavy cuts. If you want leaves, monitor flower development and the plant's flavor as the season progresses. Harvesting cannot indefinitely reverse heat-driven bolting in cilantro; plan a replacement sowing in a suitable window.

Plan the winter handoff

Before frost, decide which plants to harvest, move indoors or replace next season. Indoor growing may require a grow light and careful watering. Dry or freeze suitable herbs using a tested preservation method. A windowsill pot is an experiment: record whether it produces enough usable growth to justify the space.

A useful weekly check

Check moisture in each pot separately. Look for crowding, pests and blocked drainage. Clip enough for one planned meal. Record which herb you ran out of and which remained untouched; let that determine your next planting.

Your next step

What will you do first? Write one action and a date, then record what happened.

Action: _____

Date: _____ Result: _____

Sources and more guides

[University of Minnesota: Growing herbs](#)

[University of Maryland: Container vegetables](#)

[Open this guide online and explore the other growing guides](#)

Use local planting guidance and the variety instructions for your conditions. This is an editorial planning guide from Best Garden Channel.