

Herbs are an excellent addition to the garden

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**Cooperative Extension
Education Resource**

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Since ancient times, herbs have been used for food, fragrance, medicine, and flower arrangements. Herbs have excellent ornamental features and help beautify your landscape. They are popular garden plants since most of them tolerate the hot, dry conditions of Georgia summers, have few pest problems, and require minimal maintenance.

They require well-drained soil and full sun. Apply mulch, like pine bark or pine straw, to help the soil retain moisture and keep weeds under control.

There are many species of herbs. Basil, a tender annual, is one of the easiest to grow. Some cultivars have large green leaves while others have purple ones. Chives are closely related to garlic and its chopped leaves are used in many recipes. Dill tolerates cold weather and produces seed in the spring. Its leaves and stems are used in many recipes and the seeds are used to make dill pickles. Fennel is similar to dill, but is larger with a different scent. Some cultivars have bronze leaves.

Lavender comes in many varieties, but English lavender is the most popular one grown in the south. Lavender has beautiful, fragrant blue and purplish flowers.

There are many types of mints including spearmint, peppermint, ginger mint, pineapple mint, and others. They all share the trait of being vigorous growers with a spreading habit that can be invasive. They prefer a moist soil and are tolerant of some shade.

Rosemary is an evergreen shrub that tolerates drought conditions. It has a very distinct fragrance and comes in several cultivars. Thymes are low growing plants with a variety of cultivars that come in many colors and shapes.

Annuals, such as basil, dill, and coriander can be sown as seeds directly into the ground. Perennial herbs, like fennel, lemon balm, and mints are usually planted as transplants.

Herbs are best dried before use in a warm, dry, dark, well-ventilated place. Tie the herbs in bunches and hang upside down from a rod, but do not let them touch each other. Herbs can also be dried by freezing. Simply remove the leaves from the stems, then place them in a plastic bag in the freezer.

There are many herbs that can be grown in the home garden. If given the proper growing conditions, herbs will thrive and the gardener will be pleased with the results.



*These herbs are planted in a more formal setting at the State Botanical Gardens in Athens, Georgia
(Picture by Timothy Daly)*