

Locating & Planning Your Herb Garden

Location, Location, Location

To start an herb garden, ideally you will need to locate a sunny spot that drains well. However, if your yard is filled with shade, you can still grow herbs. Use containers that can be moved into patches of sunlight. If possible, grow your herbs near the kitchen, where you can reach them easily, especially when it is raining.

Choose your herbs based on your interests. If you are an avid cook, you will want to grow culinary herbs such as sage *Salvia officinalis*, fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, or basil *Ocimum basilicum*.

You can also design an herb garden that is a fragrant hideaway, especially when you plant drifts of lavender *Lavandula spp*, spearmint *Mentha spicata*, or scented geraniums.

For home remedies, plan to cultivate some of the old-fashioned medicinal herbs such as chamomile *Matricaria recutita* (German) or *Chamaemelum nobile* (Roman), lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*, or comfrey *Symphytum officinale*.

There are many examples of herb gardens in public gardens, parks, and even museums. It is well worth visiting local gardens before planning your own for ideas of what works well in your area.

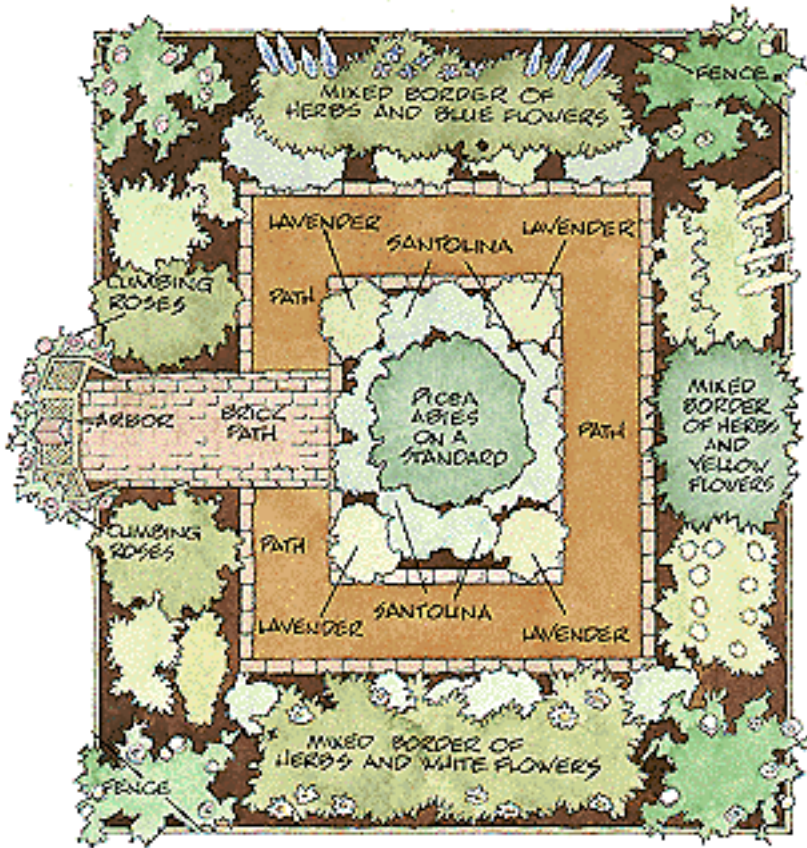
There are many books on herb gardens and design, or you can research this online. There are some wonderful books on medieval and monastery gardens, such as *Brother Cadfael's Herb Garden: An Illustrated Companion to Medieval Plants and Their Uses* by Robin Whiteman and Rob Talbot.

Some useful sites include:

- *Better Homes and Gardens* at www.bhg.com;
- Home and Garden Television's site at www.hgtv.com; or
- Search for other listings at www.google.com.

The following are some herb garden designs to use or adapt to your own setting.

Sunny Herb Garden¹



¹ BHG.com

Pocket-size Herb Garden²

Just 48 square feet is space enough for a diverse assortment of scented herbs plus a compatible fragrant rose. Seven of the nine herbs have culinary uses, making this planting especially appealing to cooks (particularly if it's located near a kitchen door). The two non-culinary choices: Lavender cotton and catmint, add to the plot's beauty with their soft textures and equally soft gray-green to gray-white leaf color. Much of this garden's charm derives from its varied foliage colors and textures; conspicuous flowers appear chiefly on the chives, catmint, lavender cotton, rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*, and rose. Check your local nursery for substitutions that will grow well in your region.

Plant list:

- A: *Allium schoenoprasum* Chives (3)
- B: *Artemisia dracunculus* French tarragon (4)
- C: *Nepeta x faassenii* Catmint (3)
- D: *Origanum majorana* (*Majorana hortensis*) Sweet marjoram (1)
- E: *Origanum vulgare* Oregano (2)
- F: *Rosa* 'Sunsprite' (1)
- G: *Rosmarinus officinalis* Rosemary (1)
- H: *Salvia officinalis* 'Icterina' Common sage (1)
- I: *Santolina chamaecyparissus* 'Nana' Lavender cotton (3)
- J: *Thymus x citriodorus* 'Aureus' Lemon thyme (1)

² *Sunset* magazine



Figure 1 Herb gardens can be attractive addition to any landscape. Here, the botanic garden at Australasian College of Health Sciences in Portland, Oregon, the first year of planting. Photograph: Erika Yigzaw.



Figure 2: The same garden, just one year later. Photograph: Sheryl Lawson

Photos provided by www.urbanherb.org.