



Herbs

At this time of year many of us are planting herbs in our gardens and window boxes to enjoy through late spring and summer. These guidelines will help you grow them successfully.

- Herbs can be divided into two major categories:
 - **green, fleshy ones** (e.g. basil, coriander, parsley, chives)
 - **shrub-like, woody ones** (e.g. thyme, rosemary, lavender, sage)
- Both categories require **sun and heat**, so aim to plant your herbs in a south or southwest facing spot. Ideally, you want a **sheltered spot** too, as some of them (basil, dill, parsley are just a few examples) will be easily damaged by wind.
- Green fleshy herbs are predominantly annuals, which can be grown from seed. They require more **water and "TLC"** than those in the second group, so it is best to plant them near each other. They need good, nutrient rich soil. Once your plant is growing, we recommend **sowing a few more seeds** in the same spot every couple of weeks to **ensure a constant, fresh supply**. This works particularly well with coriander and rocket - both of which may "**bolt**" and go to seed when you aren't looking! It's important to avoid bolting because the flavour changes and the plant is no longer of use. To help avoid bolting **keep cutting herbs** before they get to that stage, even if you don't actually need to use them.
- The woodier, tougher herbs need different treatment. Treat them mean! Add plenty of gravel, grit or sharp sand to the planting hole to **ensure good drainage**. Don't add any fertiliser or use nutrient-rich compost. **Ordinary top soil** is all that is required. **Water infrequently** - only when very dry. If it is a flowering herb, immediately after flowering, **cut back quite hard**, into green stem, not into the brown woody stems. This forces new growth, ensuring a fuller winter clothing of foliage. In very early spring, give the plant another **gentle** trim.

Enjoy and bon appetit!