

Add herbs to your garden

Botanically the word herb refers to a plant without a permanent woody stem, which includes most plants except trees and shrubs. The popular definition of an herb is one of a group of plants grown for their flavors, essential oils and scents.

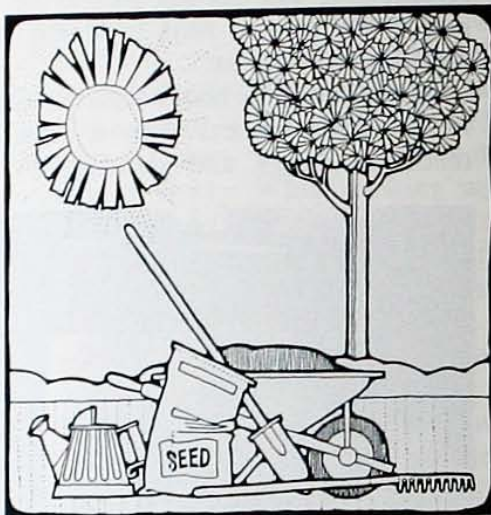
Herbs can be grown in formal or informal gardens, with vegetables or flowers, or alone. If they are to be used primarily in cooking, the herb garden should be located near the kitchen for easy access. Some herbs may be grown mainly for ornamental or fragrance purposes and should therefore be placed in a more conspicuous spot. Thyme or purple-leaved basil are attractive and could be planted among other plants. Parsley and tarragon do well in rock gardens; rosemary among roses; and thyme can be used in the cracks between stepping stones to create a fragrant path.

Generally herbs do best in full sunlight, in a protected location, on well-drained, sandy loam soil. Balm, fennel, tarragon, parsley, bergamot, chervil and mints do well in partial shade. Lavender, thyme, rosemary and lemon verbena thrive in dry places, while parsley, bergamot, lovage and mints will tolerate moist locations.

To satisfy most home requirements, only a few plants of each type need to be planted. High soil fertility is not necessary for many herbs to produce the essential oils needed for flavor and fragrance. These plants require very little water (thoroughly soak them if they begin to wilt in hot sun); they have few if any serious insect or disease problems, and require only occasional weeding. If soil drainage is poor they can be grown in raised beds or containers.

Perennial herbs should be mulched with straw to protect the roots over the winter. Mulch can also be used during the growing season to help keep the leaves clean during heavy rains by separating the leaves from the soil. Some tender perennials, such as rosemary, must be dug up in the fall, potted and grown inside in a sunny window for the winter. Some perennial herbs, such as bergamot, mints and tansy, die to the ground in late fall so the dead tops should be remov-

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ed. Lavender and sage are small shrubs whose winter-killed stems should be cut away in early spring. Spreading herbs, such as mints and chives, may need dividing every spring or every two or three years to main-

tain vigor.

Herbs are frequently grown from seeds planted indoors in a sterile soil mix approximately one-quarter inch deep. The seeds many remain exposed to the air or covered with a thin layer of sand. They should be watered with a fine mist and the container would be covered with newspaper, glass, plastic or damp burlap to prevent them from rapidly drying out. Most will germinate best at 70 degrees F. (21 degrees C.) or warmer. The germination of many of these seeds is slow and erratic.

Many herbs, such as mint, rosemary, thyme, sage and tarragon, are grown from rooted cuttings, and mints and chives are grown from divisions of existing plants. Cuttings or divisions can be taken in late summer or early fall and then grown on.

More information, on the harvesting of herbs and their use in cooking and crafts will be featured in upcoming issues of **Home & Country**. **Ruth Friendship-Keller is horticulture specialist with the Rural Organizations and Services Branch.**

Return visit to UK WI

It rained, and it rained, and it rained! But nothing could dampen the excitement and enthusiasm of the 44 Ontario Women's Institute members and their husbands who travelled to Britain for a return visit to the Women's Institutes of Cumbria and Clwyd-Flint last fall.

A 10-day tour of England preceded the official visit, and the travellers marvelled at the precision of the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, the history of Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral and the many other sites along the way.

But the highlight was the warmth extended to their guests by members of the British Women's Institutes.

The visit to North Wales, however, was the result of an official invitation to the Guelph Area to come as the guests of the WI of Clwyd-Flint.

Met on the outskirts of the town of Clwyd, the party was escorted to LLwynegrin Hall in Mold for the official welcome by the federation's

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president. The mayor of Clwyd-Flint also welcomed the group and presented a coat-of-arms of the city to Guelph Area. On behalf of the women of Ontario, Irene Henderson presented the mayor with a Canadian flag and the mayor's wife was given an Ontario WI badge.

Five days of hospitality followed, culminating in a gala Welsh banquet.

For everyone present, it was a never-to-be-forgotten evening full of warmth, friendship, pride and fun. It was the culmination of a week when women of two quite different countries, came to "touch and know the great human heart common to us all".

Peggy Knapp is the Guelph Area President