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Herb Guide

Basil (*Ocimum Basilicum*) - Basil is an annual with leafy stems that give it a bushy appearance. The leaves are very fragrant. Basil has several species and varieties; thus having different color leaves and flowers. Basil grows between 1-2' tall and flowers in July and August. Plant basil in full sun and in soil that is rich, moist, and well drained. It has to be trimmed regularly to keep it bushy.

- Culinary Uses: Basil has a rich and spicy, mildly peppery flavor with a trace of mint and clove. It is used in tomato sauce and pesto; it is superb with fish, poultry, white beans, pasta, rice, tomatoes, cheese, and eggs. It blends well with other herbs and adds snap to mild vegetables, soups, stews, and sauces.
- Harvesting and Storage: Cut sprigs when flower buds form and before they have opened. Basil can be harvested until the first frost. Basil is best stored in an oil, vinegar, or paste. It can also be dried and stored in tightly sealed containers.
- Garden ideas: Plant opal basil with marigolds for a striking contrast. Grow sweet basil and opal basil together in a window box.

Catnip (*Neputa Cataria*) – A course-leaved, gray-green perennial, catnip reveals its minthood by its stem. Soft, white fuzz covers the stem and leaves. It flowers in July through September. It likes sandy, well-drained soil and plant in sun to partial shade. Catnip is a feline aphrodisiac, although it doesn't seem to give pleasure to every cat.

- Culinary uses: Makes a good salad ingredient in recipes that require exotic greens and sharp flavors.
- Other uses: Use candied catnip leaves to serve at the end of a meal, as a digestive aid or an after-dinner mint.
- Harvesting and storing: Gather the leaves and tops in late summer when the plant is full in bloom, and dry them carefully. Sort out the tough stalks, though. Store away from moisture.

Caraway (*Carum Carvi*) – Caraway is usually termed a biennial. Some varieties display an annual habit, flowering and going to seed in their first year of growth. It grows to about 2' tall and flowers in the spring. It can be planted in full sun to part shade and it likes light, dry soil. It does not grow well near fennel, but it makes a good companion for peas.

- Culinary Uses: Every part of the plant is edible. The seeds are good in beef dishes, to season pork. The leaves can be added to salads, soups, and stews. The root can be treated like a parsnip. Try caraway in eggs, cheese, vegetables, rye, barley, and oats.
- Harvesting and Storing: The seeds are ripe when they turn brown. Don't waste time cutting the stalks before the seeds fall, then tie the stalks in bundles and hang them upside down in a warm but airy room. Let the seeds drop onto a paper-lined tray and let dry there for about two weeks. Store them in an airtight jar or container.

Chamomile, German (*Matricaria recutita*) – German chamomile is a tall, erect annual reaching 2-3 feet tall. It has daisy like blossoms, feathery foliage, and a pretty apple fragrance and flavor. It flowers in late spring through late summer. It likes sandy, well-drained soil and full sun to partial shade. People with known sensitivities to ragweed, chrysanthemums, or other members of the Compositae family should be caution about drinking chamomile tea because the flowers contain pollen.

Chamomile, German (Matricaria recutita) Cont.

- **Harvesting and Storing:** German chamomile can be seeded in either the fall or spring. Once established, it will reseed itself if some flower heads are left unharvested. If you are using the herbs for teas, carefully harvest the flowers for drying when the petals begin to turn black on the disk.

Chives (Allium Schoemoprasum) – Chives are bulb plants, though the bulbs are almost too tiny to see. The hollow, green leaves and the flowering stem shoot up from the bulbs. They produce small, pale purple flowers. They flower in June and grow to a height of about 18 inches. They like to be planted in moderately rich, well-drained soil and in full sun.

- **Culinary uses:** Chives taste like sweet, mild onions. Chives suit every flavor except sweet. Mince them up and cook with vegetables, meats, eggs, cheese, and creamy sauces. For texture and zip, add to soups, stews, and sautés. Don't overcook the flowers, either. They are edible and look and taste good in salads or garnish dishes with them.
- **Companion Planting:** It is said they help keep Japanese beetles and black spot away from roses, scab on apples, and mildew on cucurbits, so it may help to plant chives next to these plants.
- **Cultivation and Storing:** For some reason, chives do not dry well to be suitable in cooking. It is easiest and faster to buy small plants in the spring, rather than to start them yourself. Plant about 8 inches apart. If you leave the plants to bloom, cut them back after they have flowered and they will send up leaves again in the spring.

Coriander (Coriandrum sativum) – This is a bright green annual with slender, erect, finely grooved stems. It produces a tiny flower, white to pinkish, mauve, or reddish. It grows to 2-3 feet tall, flowers in spring or mid-to late summer, likes moderately rich, light, well-drained soil, and full sun to partial shade.

- **Culinary Uses:** You can use the leaves, fruits, or roots. Coriander leaves have a bold taste that combines a strong sage flavor with sharp citrus notes. Mince the leaves or use them whole as a garnish. The roots taste like the leaves, but with an added nutty flavor and are used fresh or minced. The seeds do not have a sage like flavor, just a simple taste of citrus. Use them whole or ground.
- **Cultivation and Storing:** Sow the seeds directly into the garden after the fear of frost has passed. Caraway, a biennial, is often interplanted with coriander because of its complimentary habit of growth. Harvest your coriander as soon as the leaves and flowers have become brown, but not before the seed has had a chance to scatter. Cut the whole plant and hang it up to dry; gathering the seed as it falls. Make sure the seeds have thoroughly dried. When harvesting the leaves, cut only the small, immature leaves for the best flavor. Only the seeds will store well if kept in closed jars.

Oregano (Origanum spp.) – Oreganos are aromatic, herbaceous perennials with erect, hairy, square stems. They flower July through September. Plant in full sun in well-drained, average soil.

- **Culinary uses:** It is best known for its use in tomato sauce, it has a hot, peppery flavor. It enhances cheese and egg combinations, including omelets, frittatas, quiches, and savory flans, and yeast bread, marinated vegetables, roasted bell peppers, mushrooms, roasted and stewed beef, pork, poultry, game, onions, black beans, potatoes, and shellfish. Marjoram in a greater amount can be a substitute.
- **Pests and insects:** Oregano is susceptible to root rot and fungal disease, and it can become infested with spider mites, aphids, or leaf miners.
- **Harvesting and storing:** To harvest the plant, snip springs off when the plant is only 6" high to make the plant bushier.

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis) – Rosemary is a perennial evergreen shrub whose ash-colored scaly bark and green needlelike leaves give it an overall grayish green appearance. It has pale blue flowers that are 1/2" long. Plant rosemary in a sunny location where you want it to stay; rosemary does not transplant well.

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis)

It is very challenging to grow in containers. Well-drained soil is essential. Do not over-water or underwater. Mist the branches regularly.

- Culinary Uses: Its flavor harmonizes with those of poultry, fish, lamb, beef, veal, pork, and game, particularly in their roasted form. It enhances tomatoes, spinach, peas, mushrooms, squash, cheese, eggs, and lentils. Add to potato soup, eggplant soup, marinades, salad dressings, and cream sauces. You can use both the flowers and leaves for garnishing and cooking. Crush or mince the spiky leaves before sprinkling over or rubbing into foods.
- Freeze whole springs of rosemary. Frozen rosemary is stronger than fresh.
- Harvesting and storing: It is recommended that you cut 4-inch pieces from the tips of the branches, being careful not to remove more than 20% of growth at a time.
- Garden ideas: Create the spokes of an herb wheel with rosemary. Plant it in a perennial border. Lovely hedgerows can be formed with rosemary bushes.

Dill (Anethum graveolens) -