

Top Ten Herbs to Grow in Temperate Climates



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These herbs were chosen for their ease of growing, as well as for how useful they are as a medicinal herb. These herbs can be grown in a wide range of environments. Each of them makes an excellent herbal medicine.

Photos are included to help you get more acquainted with the plant. The plant is listed by its common name, followed by its Latin name.

Calendula – *Calendula officinalis*



Calendula is an annual that is started from seed. It generally likes 12" of space but the plants can grow closer to each other in poor soil. In rich soil, it will grow 24" high. Calendula likes rich, well drained soil, with full sun, but will do OK in partial shade. Sow Calendula seeds directly in the soil as soon as the ground can be worked, or sow them in late summer/early fall. In the greenhouse start the seeds 23 days from seed to transplant. This is a beautiful yellow or orange flower and it always warms my heart to see them growing. Calendula flowers are collected for medicine. Calendula succus is my first aid, go to spray for all sorts of boo boos. It also makes an excellent salve and lip balm. Some people have decreased scars by liberal application of Calendula over time.



Calendula officinalis flower beginning to open.



Calendula officinalis flower drying.

Echinacea – *Echinacea purpurea*



This perennial herb is started from seed that needs to have a cold period for best germination. You can provide this cold period by planting the seed in the fall or by putting the seed in a small baggy or jar of slightly sandy, slightly moist soil and popping them in the freezer for a month prior to planting it. This imitates the natural cold period it would undergo in the winter. It needs to be planted 12" on center and grows about three-four feet high. Echinacea seed should be sown in the fall, winter or very early spring. It likes lime, full sun, and watch out for the voles who like to eat the roots. The flower is incredibly beautiful. The roots, flowers and seeds are collected for medicine. It makes a wonderful immunomodulator to prevent or treat infectious disease. Some folks use the leaves, but I only find them useful fresh as a spit poultice for wasp stings.



Echinacea purpurea beginning to grow in the spring.



Echinacea purpurea flower



Echinacea purpurea root being washed off after late winter harvest.

Marshmallow – *Althaea officinalis*



This perennial is started from seed and needs 15" space on center. It is best grown in deep fertile sandy loam with full sun, and good drainage. In rich soil you will find Marshmallow grows as tall as the average person. Its flowers are small and delicate and both the flowers, leaves, and button-like seed pods add a touch of elegance to the herb garden. The flowers, roots and leaves are collected for medicine. Especially the flowers and roots. They are super mucilaginous and as such heal on contact with skin or the gastrointestinal system.



Marshmallow beginning to bud.



Marshmallow flower.

Comfrey – *Symphytum officinalis*



This is a perennial you can start from a small piece of root. Get Siberian comfrey if you don't want it to go to seed and become a pest. Comfrey will grow anywhere and in any kind of condition, but it grows best in loamy well fed soil. The roots and aerial parts are used as medicine – mostly externally. Be careful as this plant can spread by seed or by small pieces of root. If you try to dig it up and leave any little pieces in the ground, each piece will make a new plant. Be sure you want this easily spread herb in your garden before planting it. It's activity as a soothing healing herb is known by all herbalists and most of them have comfrey on their property even though it can get out of hand sometimes. Comfrey is an old time favorite to put into healing salves.



Comfrey leaves

Garlic – *Allium sativum*



Most of us know this biennial. This herb is usually planted in the fall to be harvested the following summer. So it is really not a biennial since it technically only lives less than a year. However, it is usually listed this way. Garlic is started from a clove. You take apart a bulb into the individual cloves and plant them with the larger end pointing down. Cover it with a few inches of soil. It likes loamy well fed soil. The soil needs to be loose enough to grow good bulbs. Hard compacted soil will not grow good garlic. You need to add compost. Give it full sun and make sure there is plenty of air movement around it. Closed in spaces with little air movement and excess water will invite rot. Garlic needs steady water but does not like to be water logged. Stop watering long before harvest to dry it out. The cloves are used as medicine. It makes a wonderful antimicrobial and antiparasitic medicine.



Garlic growing.

Yarrow – Achillea millefolium



This is a perennial herb that needs 6-12" spacing. It does fine with less spacing if in poor soil, and needs more room if good soil. However, I have to warn you that you will get better medicine from this plant in a poor soil. Let it live some place where it has to struggle. It will like a pH of 4.5-7, and full sun. The aerial parts are collected. This includes the flowers and leaves. I usually use them together, but the flowers are more anti-inflammatory and the leaves are better at stopping bleeding.



Yarrow – *Achillea millefolium* flowers

Nettle – *Urtica dioica*



Nettle is a perennial, and grows from rhizomes. So you can dig up a clump of rhizomes or you can start it from seed. It will be quicker if you use the rhizomes. If you plant the seed, do it in the spring while it is still raining, throw the seed out on top of soil that has been slightly raked over, walk over the seed to push it in the ground and then walk away and ignore it. It likes to be near running water, but if no running water is available, provide another source of moisture. Nettle likes lots of nitrogen and grows best in dappled shade but okay with full sun. Aerial parts are harvested prior to flowering and the seed as well as the root are used as medicine. Aerial parts should not be picked after it flowers. They have been known to irritate the urinary tract after the plant flowers. This herb is very nutritious, and is a strong diuretic.

Saint John's Wort – *Hypericum perforatum*



This is a perennial. It can be started from seed or from digging up a chunk of plant. I only grow it in community with other plants as it helps the herb hide from the Klamath beetles brought into California to destroy the plant. The beetles spread everywhere and they will eat it down to the ground if grown in rows by themselves. It likes slightly acid soil and full sun. If you sow seed, do it on sand/soil mix and spray them with water occasionally, keeping it moist initially so the seed does not dry out. The top 4-6 inches of flower buds and flowers are used as medicine. It makes a beautiful blood red oil that is wonderful for bruises and makes a wonderful soap.



Saint John's Wort – *Hypericum perforatum* in flower.



Saint John's Wort oil.

Valerian – *Valeriana officinalis*



This perennial is started from seed. It grows 4' tall, and should be placed 6 " or more apart. It likes moist, rich loam soil, and a ph of 6-7. Valerian enjoys full sun to partial shade. The roots are used as a nervine to help relieve anxiety and induce relaxation. The juice of the flowers are used in biodynamic farming.



Valerian – *Valeriana officinalis* flowering.



Valerian root being washed off. They are one of the hardest roots to clean as they collect a lot of tiny rocks and other debris in between their roots.

Blueberry or Huckleberry



I have started this bush from seeds, but usually people start them from cuttings. It likes acidic soil and has shallow roots, so it needs plenty of water. It does not like to get too dried out. Use compost and mulch of sawdust on top of the compost each spring. It does well in full sun to partial shade. Some varieties of blueberries and huckleberries prefer shade. The leaves and fruit are used as medicine. The berries prevent inflammation.



Blueberry – *Vaccinium* spp. in flower

Oregon grape – *Berberis aquifolium*



The seed of this woody perennial can be sown in clay and kept moist to germinate in the 2nd or third year. It is much easier to dig up small plants that are growing off a mother plant and replant them. They are easy to transplant in this manner as long as you care for them until they get strongly rooted into their new home. Oregon grape will grow in full sun or partial shade. The root and stem bark are used as medicine for some bacterial and parasite gastrointestinal infections. The leaves also appear to be useful although they are not often used.



Oregon grape - *Berberis aquifolium*



Oregon grape - *Berberis aquifolium* bark

Sources for herb seed or live plants:

Crimson Sage Nursery

Tina Glaessner, Herbalist

PO Box 83

Orleans, CA 95556

Phone: 530-627-3065

<https://www.crimson-sage.com>

Strictly Medicinal Seeds/Horizon herbs

PO Box 299

Williams, OR 97544 USA

Phone: (541) 846-6704

Fax: (541) 846-0872 <https://strictlymedicalseeds.com>

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