

Winter Herbs

The cooler months are the perfect time to get some of those much loved herbs up and growing in preparation for the spring and summer.

Many of our favourite herbs revel at this time of the year and will grow to become strong established plants so we can continue to enjoy their culinary delights month after month.

A favourite of many people is **coriander** yet this tasty and essential herb for Thai cuisine can be troublesome for many as the weather becomes warmer and the plants begin to die almost as soon as they are taken home. Coriander enjoys being grown at this time of the year and is less likely to bolt to seed while the temperatures stay low. I always suggest to those who favour this annual herb to grow much more than you think you require. When harvesting, remember to pick from a different plant each time so that the previous plant can recover and try and use only the outer leaves so new, fresh foliage can be formed.



Thyme is old as the hills as far as herbs go and many different species are available at this time of the year (no pun intended). We're all familiar with common garden thyme, yet there are other flavoursome members of this family that are sure to tempt the tastebuds just as easily. Varieties such as Caraway, lemon, Pizza, Orange peel and silver thyme not only add an extra zing in your cooking, but they all look different and very appealing if used within stepping stones as a landscaping herb.

Winter is also the best and only time to grow true **French tarragon** (*Artemisia Dracunculus*). This culinary member of the wormwood family brings with it a subtle, yet distinct aniseed flavour that blends well with all chicken dishes and can be used in sauces. If you have trouble finding this classic herb, then a good substitute can be found in winter tarragon (*tagetes lucida*). This upright perennial is a member of the Marigold family and produces masses of bright

golden flowers during late autumn and into winter providing a bonus of colour to brighten any garden.

Sage (*salvia officinalis*) can often be difficult to see through our harsh summers so growing it during the cooler weather is definitely the answer. An Italian staple, Sage holds many uses within all pasta dishes and can be used with an assortment of meats but especially pork where its soft earthy flavour can be fully enjoyed. Search out for the purple and variegated leaved varieties as these can add further interest.



If space is at a premium, then consider growing some of these in pots on verandas, patios or balconies or for something different, try planting them into hanging baskets and keep them at arms reach near the kitchen window.

Although many gardening books will suggest otherwise, I don't recommend attempting to grow herbs indoors as they all require direct sunlight to increase their flavour and to keep them vigorously growing.

Growing your own fresh herbs can be such a rewarding experience and a wonderful excuse to get closer to nature.

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