



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
**Agriculture & Natural Resources**  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • SACRAMENTO COUNTY  
*Environmental Horticultural Notes*



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## HERBS

#70

### Basil – Ocimum basilicum

- a. Annual.
- b. Full sun.
- c. 2 feet tall and likes rich, moist soil.
- d. Flowers are white to purple.
- e. Started from seed sown indoors in late March or early April or directly into garden as soon as danger of last frost has passed.
- f. Germinates in five to fourteen days.
- g. Harvest just before plant blooms and harvest through season.
- h. Best used fresh. The drying process may brown the leaves. Pleasant fragrance.
- i. Dark Opal Basil variety is often used as an ornamental.

### Bee balm - Monarda didyma

- a. Perennial.
- b. Sun to part shade.
- c. Prefers moist, rich soil but does well in variety of soils.
- d. Can be grown from seed but takes longer to establish. Spreads from root runners.
- e. Blooms in July into September, four feet tall.
- f. Flowers attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.
- g. Harvest leaves before plant blooms. Prolong the blooming season by deadheading flowers.

### Calendula - Calendula officinalis

- a. Annual.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Average, well drained soil.
- d. Sow seeds as soon as ground can be worked.
- e. Germinates in ten days to two weeks, self-sows freely. Transplant in spring at one-foot spacing.
- f. Genus name “calendula” means plant will bloom nearly year round or blooms on the “calend’s” (the new moon of each month). Marigold in Catholic traditional festivals held in honor of the Virgin Mary.
- g. Harvest flower tops when blooming. Blooms spring through fall. Deadhead flowers to encourage growth.

### Catnip - Nepeta cataria

- a. Perennial and can grow to 5 feet tall.
- b. Full sun or partial shade.
- c. Tolerates a variety of soil combinations from poor soil to rich soil.
- d. Easily propagated from seed or root division.
- e. Essential oils released from catnip have an euphoric effect on some cats.



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**Chamomile - Matricaria recutita**

- a. Annual.
- b. Full sun to partial shade.
- c. Grows from 1 to 2 feet.
- d. Prefers slightly alkaline soil. Tiny seeds can be mixed with sand to ensure even distribution directly into garden.
- e. Self sows freely. Sow early in spring to ensure less leggy flowers and flower quickly.
- f. Roman Chamomile is a perennial that is grown as a ground cover that prefers slightly acid soil.
- g. Harvest flowers for drying when petals begin to droop.

**Chives - Allium schoenoprasum**

- a. Bulb plant.
- b. Will tolerate full sun or partial shade.
- c. Drought tolerant and grows in almost any soil but a rich soil is best.
- d. Can be started from seed or purchased or borrow a clump from a friend.
- e. Clumps should be divided every three to four or five years.
- f. Cut just before you use. Best used fresh.

**Echinacea – Echinacea augustifolia**

- a. Perennial.
- b. Enjoys dappled shade during hot summer months.
- c. One to four feet tall.
- d. Hardy in any soil type but prefers a rich soil.
- e. Sown from seed takes three to four years before roots can be harvested.
- f. Propagated by division after two years.
- g. White or purple flowers.
- h. Harvest roots in autumn by dividing larger roots.

**Hops - Humulus lupulus**

- a. Perennial prolific vine resembling grape leaves.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Well drained humus soil.
- d. Can be grown from seed but better to propagate by dividing young shoots from main crowning in spring or fall or by cutting roots from older shoots in late summer.
- e. Fast growing. Flowers or strobiles appear from July to August.
- f. Harvest early fall on a clear day to reduce moisture when strobiles begin to feel firm, turn a slight amber color and are covered with a yellow dust.

**Hyssop – Hyssopus officinalis**

- a. Perennial which grows to 2 feet.
- b. Full sun to partial shade.
- c. Light well drained soil.
- d. Easily grown from seed or propagated from spring or fall root division.
- e. Companion to grapes and ornamental bee plant.
- f. To harvest, cut stems just before flower opens.

**Lavender – Lavendula augustifolia (and many other varieties)**

- a. Perennial which grows two to three feet tall. Mediterranean shrub with hairy leaves.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Light well drained soil.
- d. Lavenders can be grown from seed cuttings or root division cuttings taken in spring or fall are the best but grows very slowly the first year.
- e. Harvest buds just as the flowers are about to open. Silver gray foliage.
- f. Numerous varieties featuring different color flowers and different heights for shrubs.
- g. Fragrant garden plant.
- h. Deer resistant.

**Lemon balm - Melissa officinalis**

- a. Perennial which grows to two feet.
- b. Prefers partial shade.
- c. Average, well drained soil.
- d. Easily grown from seed. Sown in spring or early fall and self-sows.
- e. Harvest just as the plant comes into bloom, careful not to bruise before drying. Loses much of its scent when drying.
- f. Delicate lemon scent.

**Lemon Verbena – Aloysia triphylla**

- a. Deciduous shrub loses most of its leaves in fall. Flowers from July to September.
- b. Prefers full sun.
- c. Rich moist soil.
- d. Propagated from stem cuttings pencil sized or smaller. Mid and late summer stems take best.
- e. Harvest sprigs of leaves all year long. Cut back mid summer and in winter. Fragrant shrub.

**Mints - Mentha species (many varieties)**

- a. Perennial.
- b. Full sun to partial shade.
- c. Prefers rich, moist, well drained soil.
- d. Propagate with stem or root cuttings.
- e. Use as a ground cover or in containers.
- f. Twenty true species. There are many varieties with different scents such as apple, orange bergamot and spearmint. Flowers July to August.
- g. Harvest as soon as it comes up in spring. Pick carefully to prevent browning of leaves.

**Oregano – Origanum vulgare**

- a. Perennial which grows to 2 feet.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Prefers dry, light slightly alkaline soil.
- d. Propagated from seeds, stem cuttings or root division. Seeds germinate slowly.
- e. Harvest as plant begins to bloom.

**Parsley - Petroselinum crispum**

- a. Grow as an annual.
- b. Full sun to partial shade.
- c. Moderately rich, moist, well drained soil.
- d. Three to six weeks to germinate.
- e. Plant from spring to fall, transplanting is difficult.
- f. Harvest leaves once they reach a height of about eight inches and at anytime thereafter.
- g. Loses flavor when dried.

**Rosemary - Rosmarinus officinalis**

- a. Shrub or groundcover.
- b. Enjoys full sun or partial shade.
- c. Prefers a light soil with good drainage.
- d. Purchase plant from nursery as propagation is difficult. Stem cuttings from spring growth is an option.
- e. Use as a good hedge plant border or ground cover.
- f. Harvest throughout the year by cutting 4-inch pieces from tops. Do not remove more than 20% of growth.
- g. “Tuscan blue” is an upright branching shrub variety. Pine scented evergreen perennial shrub. Grows from two feet to more than six feet tall. If leaf tips droop in thirst, water immediately.

**Sage – Salvia officinalis**

- a. Perennial sub shrub.
- b. Prefers sun.
- c. Grows up to 3 feet.
- d. Plant in rich well drained soil.
- e. Can be propagated by seeds, cuttings, layering or root division of older plants.
- f. Powerful distinctive fragrance. Thickly branching shrub-like plant produces dense shoots with velvety gray-green leaves. Flowers in June.
- g. Harvest by snipping leaves from branches and discard stems.

**Savory - Satureja hortensis**

- a. Perennial which grows to 18 inches.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Likes a moderately rich, sandy soil – Summer savory.
- d. Likes a light soil with good drainage – Winter savory.
- e. Grown easily from seeds and self-sows.
- f. Harvest when plant is 6 inches tall by snipping tops. This also extends the harvest period.

**Tarragon - Artemisia dracunculus**

- a. Perennial.
- b. Full sun to partial shade.
- c. Rich, sandy, well drained soil.
- d. Propagated by roots in spring.
- e. Transplant one-inch sections of root tips with bud.
- f. Leaves bruise easily, handle with care during harvest and drying in late June.

**Thyme – Thymus vulgaris**

- a. Perennial that is evergreen.
- b. Sun or partial shade. Grows to 18”.
- c. Prefers dry soil.
- d. Propagation by root division is easiest. Also can be propagated by seed, cuttings, and layering.
- e. Use as a ground cover or border plant.
- f. Harvest leaves before blossoms open. A second harvest may weaken plant.

**Yarrow- Achillea millefolium**

- a. Perennial.
- b. Full sun.
- c. Moderately rich, well drained soil.
- d. Propagate by seeds or root divisions in spring and fall. Plant with eight to twelve inch spacing.
- e. Divide clumps every three to four years.
- f. Harvest plants as they come into full bloom.
- g. Dries quickly and easily.
- h. Eighty-five species.