

Thyme for Herbs in Austin A Planting and Growing Guide

The Austin Herb Society-visit us at austinherbsociety.org
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Soil- Where it all Begins!

Along with proper herb selections for the Austin area and a location that will provide the herbs at least 8 hours of sun, soil preparation is a vital step toward the cultivation of healthy herbs. Most herbs will require well draining soil with a pH of about 7. A simple soil test will determine the pH level of your soil. (See resources) Regardless of soil type available, the addition of organic compost to the soil will not only add nutrients, but also help to create an ideal growing medium for herbs.

Preparing the Soil

Working the soil to a depth of 18 to 24 inches will ensure good drainage. (The deeper the better) If the soil cannot be worked to the recommended depth, then it will be necessary to construct raised beds consisting of concrete blocks, bricks, stone, or untreated wood or timbers to get the required soil depth for effective drainage.

Planning and Selection

From the list of suggested herbs in the provided guide, purchase healthy plants from one of Austin's local nurseries. Carefully read the entire plant label that comes with the herb plants. The label should have the common and botanical names listed plus important growing information. If the label is missing, ask the nursery for more information or do your own research. Plan and plant wisely as many herbs do not transplant well.

Planting and Fertilization

The best seasons to plant herbs in the Austin area are the early fall and early spring. Planting at these times will allow the root systems to become established prior to the cold of winter or severe heat of summer. Once the plant selection(s) and soil preparations have been completed, it is time to put the herbs into the ground. Carefully remove the plants from their containers and place into holes slightly larger than their root mass. Fill in the holes with additional soil. Arrange the soil around the plants so that the soil is at the same level as the original containers. Firmly press down the soil with your hands to remove any air pockets in the soil. Water in the newly planted herbs thoroughly and deeply at the base of the plants. Until the herbs are established keep a close watch on the soil moisture. The soil should never remain soggy nor be allowed to completely dry out. When watering the plants try to keep the foliage dry, as this will prevent formation of fungal diseases. Herbs do not require heavy fertilization, too much fertilizer will diminish the aroma and flavor of the herbs. An application of organic compost in the fall and spring, plus an occasional application of liquid seaweed should keep the herbs in excellent condition.

Mulching

As the warmer days of late March and early April approach, the herbs will appreciate about a two-inch layer of gravel or an organic mulch material, like shredded bark, pine needles or peanut hulls. Mulching helps keep the soil cool, retains the moisture during long hot days, and suppresses weed growth.

Container Grown Herbs

When a limited amount of space is available, growing herbs in containers and pots may be the solution. Select porous pots and containers with adequate drain holes to allow the water to drain. Ordinary clay pots are a good choice. Glazed ceramic and plastic containers may retain excess moisture that can cause root rot. If several herbs are to be planted together be sure they all have the same growing requirements. Using a piece of screen wire or shard of a clay pot over the drainage hole will prevent the soil from escaping. After covering the drain hole, add approximately one inch of pebbles or gravel to the bottom of the container. Then fill the container with a high quality potting soil to within one inch of the top of the container. This will allow room to add mulch to the container. Plant the herbs at the same level as in their original containers. Gently press soil around the plant or plants and water thoroughly. Mulch with shredded bark or small pebbles. Check soil moisture often, as container grown herbs will require more water than herbs planted directly in the garden. Remember that with each watering important nutrients are leached from the soil. A weekly application of an organic product such as seaweed emulsion will replace the lost nutrients. Container grown herbs need protection from extreme heat, cold, and excessive rainfall. Now with a little care and effort you will be rewarded with beautiful pots and containers of herbs to enhance your deck or patio, or add a focal point to the landscape. You will also be able to add delicious flavors to foods and beverages. Be Creative!!

Easily Grown From Seeds

Arugula & Wild Roquette

Borage

Calendula

Chervil

Cilantro

Dill (needs cool weather for germination)

Fennel

Parsley (slow to germinate, remove growth inhibitor by soaking 3 days, change water daily)

Salad Burnet

Basil (germinates quickly but young seedlings susceptible to fungal disease)

Perilla

Chives & Garlic Chives

***WHETHER PLANTED IN THE GARDEN OR IN CONTAINERS,
USE AND ENJOY YOUR NEW FOUND FRIENDS!***

