



COOL WEATHER HERBS

by Susan Gail Wood
South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America

Fall is a great time to plant herbs in the Houston area, especially since you can attend the 42nd Annual Herb Fair on November 1st at 1475 West Gray Multi Service Center from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. to pick out your favorite plants. The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit members will give you great growing and using advice. Details: www.herbsociety-stu.org

Cool season annuals to plant in October or start from seed: dill, parsley, fennel, borage and coriander (cilantro). Only calendulas and nasturtiums are affected by a hard freeze. All will flower and set seed next spring, then die back once the weather heats up in May.

Perennial herbs to transplant in October from 4" or larger pots: rosemary, lavender, catnip, culinary sage, pineapple sage, ornamental salvias, bay trees, oregano, Mexican mint marigold, lemon balm, lemongrass, lemon verbena and mints.

Rosemary planted in the fall rewards you with tiny blue flowers in early spring. "A dry rosemary is a dead rosemary" so don't let it go for more than a day or two in dry soil.

Pick the lavender you prefer by brushing a few leaves to release the fragrance. To insure lavender won't rot from excess moisture give it good drainage by adding sand or pea gravel to the soil or potting mix.

To successfully grow catnip, place a wire basket over the base of the herb to protect it from cats who love to nibble and roll on the leaves. Anything outside the wire basket is fair game.

Culinary sage, pineapple sage and ornamental sages are easy to grow. Black and blue sage spreads rampantly, so give away extra plants to all your friends next spring.



Bay trees are slow growing but make a lovely specimen tree in full sun area. They attract beneficial green lacewings to your garden. Scale or a black sooty mold on the leaves means you are growing it in too much shade.

Oregano is easy to grow, forming large clumps that need to be divided every 3 years or so. Mexican mint marigold, called "Texas tarragon", has delightful yellow blossoms each fall.

Lemon verbena is a tender perennial shrub needing protection from a freeze. It is late to bud out in spring, so water and wait. Lemongrass blooms with a large plume in late fall. It, along with lemon balm and various mints, will die back to the ground in freezing weather but recover from the roots once spring is here.

Apply fresh mulch to your herb garden in the fall. Water to protect herbs before a hard freeze. Use freeze cloth or sheets to cover tender herbs, securing the edges with rocks or bricks so they don't blow off during the night.

Most importantly, water well at least once a week if insufficient rainfall. Many herbs that die over the winter do so from a lack of water, not the cold weather.

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Where can you find all these herbs? And great advice on growing herbs in this area?

At the 42nd annual Herb Society of America/South Texas Unit Herb Fair, of course! The Herb Fair is in a new location this year: the Multi-Service Center at 1475 West Gray. Doors open at 9am and there's always a long line waiting to get in, so go early for the multiple demonstrations, vendors, herb plants and Passalong Plant area, along with the popular blends, jellies, soaps and craft items. Free admission and doors close at 3pm. Details and advance order forms are available at www.herbsociety-stu.org.