

HERBS

Anise

Anise is a relatively slow growing annual which flowers about 3 months after planting. It generally grows to a height of about 2 feet and produces yellowish white flowers in umbrella-like clusters. It will grow best in a deep, fertile soil in a sunny, warm location. When planted in rows, the plants should be 6 to 10 inches apart in rows 2 to 3 feet apart. This herb is grown for its seed which are ready for harvest about one month after bloom. The licorice-flavored seed is widely used in breads and cookies.

Basil

Basil is an annual which grows about 2 feet tall with leafy, light-green foliage. It produces tiny white flowers which are often tinged in lavender. This is a relatively easy herb to grow and should be planted in the spring after the last frost or sown indoors and transplanted to the garden. It does best when grown in full sun. The stem tips should be pruned or pinched off to promote a bushier more compact plant. Do not over fertilize as this may reduce the desired flavor. This herb is grown for its leaves which are best harvested prior to blooming or when blooming occurs. The leaves may be preserved by freezing.

Borage

This is an attractive annual which may grow to be 3 feet tall. The leaves are gray-green, and it produces star shaped flowers which are bright blue. Borage should be seeded in the garden as it is difficult to transplant. It does best in full sun but does fairly well in partial shade. This herb is grown for its leaves which should be harvested before the plant flowers.

Caraway

Caraway is a biennial with the seeds being produced the second year. The first year it grows to about 12 to 15 inches in height and produces bright green, carrot-like leaves. It will die-back in the winter but comes back in the spring and grows to a height of about 2 feet. At loom it produces greenish white flowers which are borne in clusters. The seeds for which this herb is grown are ready to harvest about one month after flowering. After flowering, the plant dies. In Louisiana, this herb should be seeded in early fall, allowed to freeze and go dormant and then produce seed the following summer. Difficult to grow in south Louisiana and along the coast.

Chervil

Chervil is an annual that does well in flowering borders and makes attractive potted plants. It grows to a height of 2 feet and produces green fern-like leaves resembling parsley. It produces tiny white flowers in umbrella-like clusters. This herb prefers partial shade and a slightly moist soil at all times. It should be planted in early spring and the plant thinned to 3 to 4 inches apart. The leaves for which this herb is grown should be picked before the buds break and flowering occurs.

Coriander

This is a fast growing annual which reaches a height of about 2-1/2 feet. It is easy to grow and should be seeded in place. The plants should be thinned to 7 to 10 inches apart. It prefers sun but will do fairly well in partial shade. This herb is grown for both its seed and leaves. The leaves can be harvested when the plants are 4-6 inches tall. The seeds should be gathered as they ripen. Coriander is widely used in many Spanish (Mexican) dishes and may also be called "Cilantro." It is used extensively in the manufacture of sausage.

Fennel

Common fennel or sweet fennel is a tall growing perennial that lacks hardiness to survive winters in North Louisiana. Therefore, it is most often grown as an annual and can reach a height of 3 to 5 feet. It should be seeded in place in full sun on rows 3 feet apart with plants being 10 to 12 inches apart. All the parts of this plant may be used. The stems should be harvested before the flowers bloom and the leaves when flowers start to bloom. Seeds turn brown when ripe and can be dried for later use.

Marjoram

Marjoram produces an attractive bushy plant which grows from 1 to 2 feet tall and can be used in borders or as a container plant. It produces small leaves which are light green on top and a gray color beneath. In all areas, except Gulf South Louisiana, it should be grown as an annual although it is actually a perennial. It is best to start seed indoors and set transplants out after the last killing frost. This herb is grown for its leaves which should be harvested just before the plant blooms for full flavor.

Mint

There are many different kinds of mint grown in Louisiana including spearmint, peppermint and orange mint. All these mints are hardy perennials and are among the easiest and most popular garden mints. They may be started from seed but cuttings are generally recommended. Mints prefer sun but will take shade. They are true perennials but mint beds should be renewed every three to four years. Mints are harvested for their stems and leaves and the more frequent the harvest the better the plant grows. Stalks should be removed before they go to seed.

Oregano

Oregano is a hardy perennial and does well in containers. It produces a leafy, shrub-like plant that may be from 2 to 2-1/2 feet tall. It produces broad leaves with pale pink flowers borne in loose clusters or short spikes. Oregano should be planted in full sun and well drained soil. Plants should be spaced at least 10 to 12 inches apart. Cutting back the flowers will stimulate growth of the foliage. Although this plant is a perennial, it should be dug up and replanted when the plants become woody, which usually takes 3 to 4 years. Oregano is grown for its leaves, and they can be used at any stage of growth of the plant.

Rosemary

Rosemary is a hardy evergreen shrub in Louisiana. It normally grows 4 to 6 feet in height and produces gray-green foliage and pale blue flowers. It does best in a relatively dry area receiving plenty of sun.

Sage

Sage is a shrub-like perennial which grows to be one to two feet tall. This herb will do best if started indoors and transplanted to the garden or flower bed. Place in an area that is well drained and receives full sun. Plants should be at least 2 to 2-1/2 feet apart due to their bush-like growth character. The plants eventually will become woody and should be removed and new plants set out every 3 to 4 years. This herb which is grown for its leaves should be harvested before bloom. Sage may be difficult to grow along our coastal areas.

Savory

Two types of savory can be grown in Louisiana: summer savory and winter savory. Summer savory is an annual which may grow to 1-1/2 feet in height. It has erect branching stems and gray-green colored leaves. The winter savory is a shrub-like perennial which grows to be about 1 foot tall. Both plants should be placed in areas receiving plenty of sun and relatively dry soil. Both herbs are grown for their leaves which should be gathered before blooming begins.

Sesame

Sesame is an annual which grows 3 feet high and produces attractive green leaves and pale colored orchid flowers from mid-summer to early fall. It should be planted in place in sunny areas and spaced 8 to 10 inches apart. Sesame is grown for its seed which ripen about a month after flowers bloom.

Tarragon

Tarragon is an attractive plant which grows to a height of about 2 feet. It produces fine, dark green leaves with small whitish green flowers in tight clusters. It is a perennial which is grown from cuttings or division. It does well in partial shade. The roots should be protected in the northern areas of Texas by covering with mulch. New planting should be made every three to four years. The leaves for which this herb is grown are most flavorful when picked before the plant blooms or just as blooming occurs. The Tarragon grown from seed is of a coarser type and is less desirable.

Thyme

There are several different types of thyme. Common thyme is a perennial which produces a shrub-like plant about one foot tall. It produces purple flowers and gray-green leaves. Thyme likes dry soil and areas receiving abundant sunlight. The plant should be spaced 12 inches apart. Constant harvesting prevents the plants from becoming woody although they should be renewed every 3 to 4 years. Harvest occurs by clipping the tops when the plants are in full bloom.