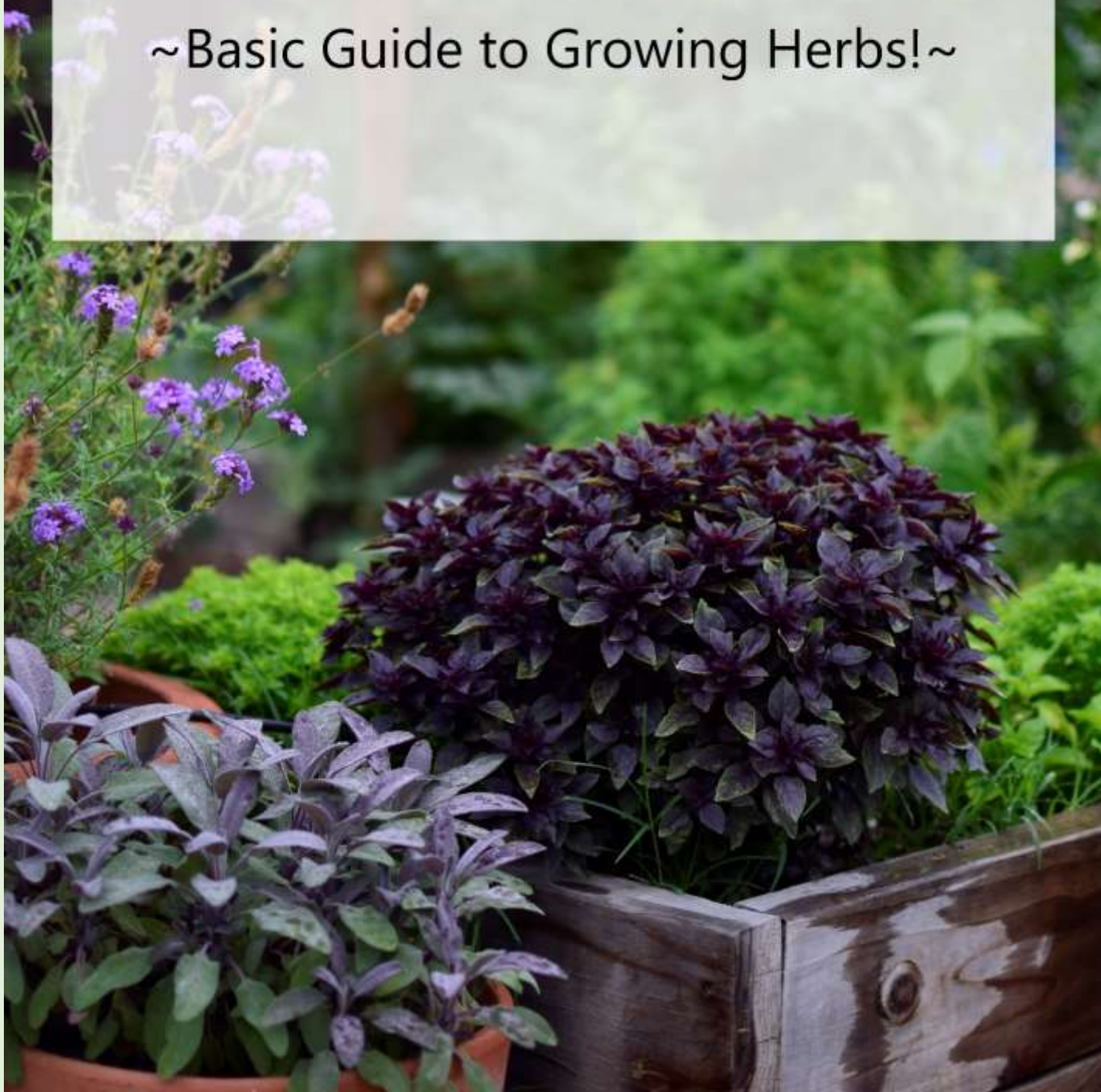


Welcome to  
*Freckled Californian's*






~Basic Guide to Growing Herbs!~



Hello! My name is Randi, and I'm an urban gardener that is passionate about inspiring others to get started growing their own food. After you finish reading this guide, I hope you'll visit my website, [FreckledCalifornian.com](http://FreckledCalifornian.com), where I document my experience growing food, my favorite recipes, and nature-inspired home projects. Believe it or not, just four years ago I was staring out my window at a completely barren yard, wanting to learn to garden and researching where to start. I can tell you that the most important thing is to **take action** and get those hands dirty! It's the best way to learn. I hope this guide helps you jumpstart your gardening journey!

## Why should I grow herbs?

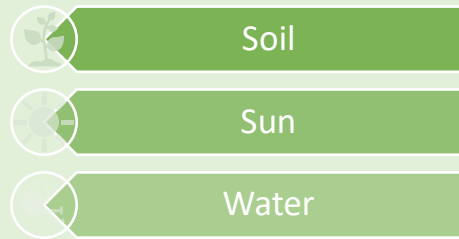
Herbs are usually the first thing I recommend beginner gardeners grow, but I also feel that they are an extremely useful addition to any gardener's repertoire because:

-  The majority of herbs are easy to grow
-  They don't require much space and can be grown in pots and even indoors.
-  Herbs are expensive at the grocery and usually go to waste. Have you ever paid \$5 for a bunch of sage yet only need a few leaves for a recipe...then the rest goes bad in the fridge?
-  Most herbs are perennial or can be propagated from cuttings---this means you only need to buy seeds or a plant at the nursery ONCE and then have herbs forever!
-  Herbs bring food to the next level. Cooking with fresh herbs will change your life.

---

**Personal NOTE~** The recommendations in this guide are based on my personal experiences in the garden. There are literally hundreds of herbs in the world, so I can't possibly list and discuss each one, but I hope this free guide gives you a great start on your gardening journey. Please make sure to visit my website [FreckledCalifornian.com](http://FreckledCalifornian.com) for information on learning your [garden zone](#), how to [start from seed](#), and other useful gardening tips.

# Basic Growing Requirements



**SOIL.** A good, basic garden soil is also required---this would mean the kind of soil you would find in a nursery labeled as "potting mix" "raised bed mix" or "garden soil". As the names suggest, be sure to choose the kind of product for your garden type (ie. in a pot, in a raised bed, or an in-ground garden). There are also soil amendments you can buy and mix into your already

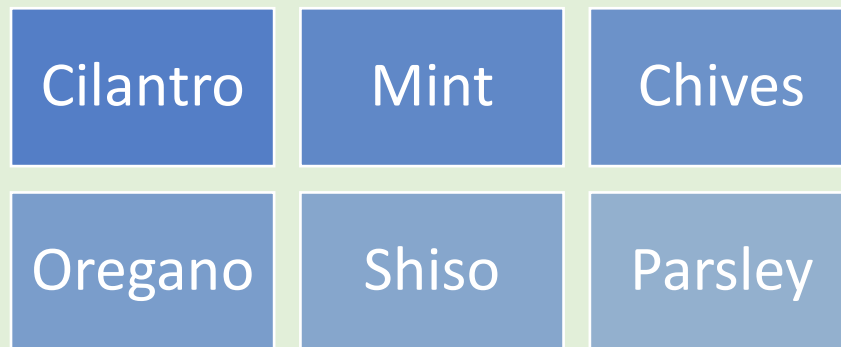


existing garden soil to help enrich it, but starting with a good, basic soil mix is just fine. Personally, I grow organically in my garden so make sure you also check the label on whatever you buy to see if it is organic as well.

💡 Unsure about your soil? A lot of garden centers and nurseries can assess your garden soil if you are unsure if it is good for growing herbs. You might just need to bring a sample in.

**SUN.** Most herbs like full sun (typically 6 or more hours of sunlight).

Here are some recommendations for herbs that don't need full sun in my garden:



**WATER.** Every herb (and plant!) has different water requirements. As a general rule of thumb, water deeply and less often. The soil on top may start to look dry, but you can use a finger to dig down a bit and see if there is any moisture. **Here's the thing. There is no perfect answer for how much to water. It depends on temperature, garden/pot size, soil quality, kind of plant, and more! So, since there is no perfect answer, give yourself a break and don't be afraid to mess up!** You will start to get to know your plant and get better at watering over time! Now, there are some herbs that tolerate poor quality soil and prefer more dry conditions. Those herbs are discussed in the next section.

As a final note on watering, make sure your soil has good drainage because most plants can develop root rot and disease if left in water-logged soil. For growing in containers, this means also checking that your pot has a drainage hole in the bottom.



## Drought Tolerant, Mediterranean Herbs

Talking about drainage also brings up a family of herbs near and dear to my heart: Mediterranean herbs. Being a Southern California gardener, I am growing in a Mediterranean climate which is arid, dry, and very hot in the summer. While this can sometimes pose a problem for plants, there are some herbs that actually prefer this kind of climate. Keep that in mind when thinking about drainage and watering your plants. If you are growing a more drought tolerant herb, you will need to water less and make sure drainage is excellent. Mediterranean herbs are also more tolerant of poor soil quality. Some of my favorites are: rosemary, oregano, lavender, and sage.

## Should you start from seed?

Remember what I said about most herbs being perennial or easy to propagate?

**Perennial** means that the plant will die back (or should be pruned back) in Winter, but will re-grow in Spring.

**Propagation** is when you take cuttings of a plant and root them to create another plant identical to the original!

**Because of these characteristics of herbs, it is often more time efficient to purchase starts (baby plants) from a nursery if the budget allows.** If cared for properly, you most likely won't need to buy them again. For example, I purchased an oregano plant from my local nursery and planted it under a lime tree in my backyard. This was three years ago and the plant is still thriving! I will be propagating some cuttings this year to get new plants, as the original is getting very old and woody.



That being said, there are some herbs that are so easy to start from seed that you should do it! See below for some suggestions on what herbs are easy to start from seed:

Basil

Dill

Chives

Sage

Chamomile

Cilantro

Calendula

# What are annual herbs?

**Annuals** only last for one season (unlike perennials) so they will die back at the end of the season and need to be completely started again the following year. For annual herbs, it is up to you if you would rather buy plants each season or start from seed each season. Some examples of annual herbs are:

Basil

Dill

Cilantro

Parsley

Chamomile

## When to grow herbs

Gardening is extremely climate specific, so the answer to this question is not so simple. In general, most herbs like spring weather (cooler temps) and don't like extreme heat, frost, or snow. Therefore, the ideal time to start a herb garden is in Spring for most areas of the country. That being said, the climate in California is very different and unique! We have mild winters and rare frosts. The temperatures in Fall actually mimic typical Spring temperatures! Therefore, many herbs discussed here can also be planted in Fall in milder winter zones.

---

Don't forget, all [FreckledCalifornian.com](http://FreckledCalifornian.com) subscribers (you!) have access to my personal seed starting schedule which has been inspired by my experiences growing in this special climate. Please be sure to check it out. Let me know if you have trouble finding the link (it should be in the welcome email). For those of you in different climates, this guide can also be helpful as a breakdown or reminder of what kinds of vegetables, herbs, or flowers to plant when the time is right in your area.




# Plant what you love to eat!


Before I leave you to go start your herb garden, I just wanted to remind you of the most important part of it all---growing what you'll actually use and eat! Remember, you are going to enjoy gardening a lot more if you grow herbs that you will actually use in the kitchen. Here are some fun ideas for herbs to grow based on meals:


<b>Pizza &amp; Pasta</b> basil oregano parsley	<b>Soups</b> bay thyme parsley	<b>Salads</b> dill chives basil mint
<b>Poultry</b> thyme sage rosemary cilantro	<b>Tea</b> chamomile mint lemon verbena	

Don't forget that you can make your own teas with herbs as well! Some of my favorite herbs for making tea are chamomile, lemon verbena, and mint.

## Final Tips for Growing Herbs

 Pick them often! Harvesting herbs actually helps to promote more growth.

 Mint is super invasive. Only grow it in a pot. Trust me.

 Harvest herbs in the morning for peak flavor! During the heat of the day, the sun can cause those flavorful plant oils to dissipate and dry.

Alright, garden friends, get out there and grow some herbs! **Also, if you enjoyed this guide can you do me a favor? Please leave a comment on this article [HERE](#) so that others can see how it helped you and hopefully join our gardening journey! Thank you!**

~ Randi Freckled Californian