

# Herbs



Oregano



Chives



Basil



Cilantro

## Did You Know

- Herbs are often defined as the leaves and flowers of plants that are used for flavor, fragrance, or medicine.
- The part of the plant used defines it as an herb or a spice. For example, when using the green leaves of the plant *Coriandrum sativum*, it is the herb cilantro, and when using the seeds, it is the spice coriander.
- Although herbs are not a large part of Montana's agricultural landscape, the number of Montana farms producing herbs has increased substantially over the last 10 years.
- Wild mint and beebalm (wild bergamot) are herbs native to Montana. Traditionally, mint tea was so commonly drunk amongst Apsaalooke (Crow) people, that one of the Apsaalooke words for "mint" is the same as the word for "tea." Mint tea was also brewed by Chipewa-Cree people to treat colds, headaches, coughs,

and fevers. Sélish (Salish), Ktunaxa (Kootenai), and Qaeisp'è (Pend d'Oreilles) tribes used beebalm for medicinal purposes, including to cure colds and treat mouth and throat infections.

## Selection

Select herbs that are free of disease, discoloration, or damage. Harvest or purchase only enough herbs for immediate use, unless planning to dry or freeze them.

## Storage

Gently wash and dry herbs after harvest or purchase. Trim the bases of the stems, place them in a jar with an inch of water, cover loosely with a plastic bag, then transfer to the refrigerator. Freeze or dry herbs that will not be used within a week after purchase.



Herb	Bay Leaf	Parsley	Chives	Dill	Lavender	Sage	Tarragon
Taste	Bitter, minty, pungent	Bright, peppery	Mild onion flavor	Pungent, tangy	Floral, minty	Minty, slightly bitter, citrus	Licorice, lemon flavor
Plant Family (common name)	Lauraceae (laurel family)	Apiaceae (carrot family)	Amaryllidaceae (amaryllis family)	Apiaceae (carrot family)	Lamiaceae (mint family)	Lamiaceae (mint family)	Asteraceae (daisy family)
Fun Facts	In ancient Greece, famous athletes and artists were crowned with wreaths of bay leaves.	There are two main types of parsley: curly and flat leaf (Italian).	Wild chives are native to Montana and can be found growing wildly in the western region of the state.	Both the leaves and seeds of dill plants are used, and their flavors differ substantially.	In 77 A.D. Romans documented the use of lavender to repel insects and treat insect bites.	Sage is of the genus <i>Salvia</i> . <i>Salvia</i> is derived from <i>salvus</i> , which means healthy in Latin.	Tarragon's root system resembles coiled snakes, making medieval healers falsely believe it was a cure for snakebites.
Native Region	Mediterranean	Southern Europe	Europe, Northern Asia, North America	Mediterranean, Western Asia	Mediterranean	Mediterranean	Central Asia, Siberia



## Cooking

**Garnish.** Use whole leaves or chop them into smaller sizes, and sprinkle onto any dish for added flavor and color.

**Dressings.** There are many herbs that can enhance the flavor of homemade dressings. A cilantro lime dressing is perfect for topping Mexican-inspired dishes, while a lemon dill dressing pairs well with Mediterranean dishes.

**Oils.** Herb-infused oils can be a very flavorful addition to bread and pasta, however, it's important to follow food safety guidelines when infusing oil at home. For directions and safety recommendations visit <https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/PNW/PNW664.pdf>.

**Cook.** Delicate herbs, such as basil, chives, cilantro, dill, mint, marjoram, and sage should be added to hot dishes towards the end of cooking to preserve flavor. While less delicate herbs, like thyme, rosemary, and oregano are added much earlier in the cooking process. Bay leaves and sprigs of less delicate herbs can be added to stews, soups, and sauces while they are simmering, and removed before serving.

**Bake.** Chives, parsley, rosemary, and oregano are a few examples of herbs that are popular additions to baked goods. They can be mixed into dough before baking.

**Freeze.** Herbs should be frozen at their peak freshness and are best used within 3-6 months.

**Dry.** When harvesting from a garden or purchasing too much at the market, drying herbs is an effective way to reduce food waste while continuing to add flavor to your meals in the colder months. A simple method is air-drying. After cleaning the herbs, hang them in small bunches in a warm, dark, well-ventilated area until the leaves are crispy. A dehydrator may also be used. Store dried herbs in airtight containers away from heat and sunlight. Use within a year for the best flavor.

**Substitute.** It is important to note that the general rule when substituting fresh for dried herbs is about 3 to 1. For example, use 1 Tbsp of dried sage for every 3 Tbsp of fresh sage.

## Book Nook

*A Kid's Herb Book*, by Lesley Tierra

*Rooftop Garden*, by Danna Smith

*The Spice Alphabet Book*, by Jerry Pallotta



## Nutrition Information

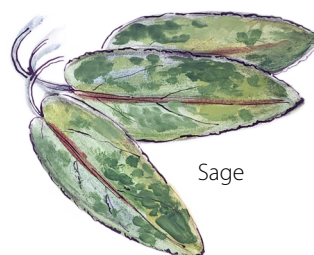
Although herbs are normally consumed in small quantities, adding herbs can provide many health benefits. Herbs contain vitamins, have anti-inflammatory properties, and are rich in antioxidants. Many herbs are a source of Vitamins C, K, and A, and numerous studies have shown positive health impacts of consuming certain herbs, such as lowering cholesterol and protecting against cancer. Herbs can also be used to enhance flavor without adding sugar, salt, or fat.

## Gardening

Herbs are a perfect addition to any Montana garden, as they can be grown in beds, containers, and even indoors. Most thrive with at least 6 hours of direct sunlight and well-drained soil, but their specific requirements will differ. Many hardy herbs can be planted several weeks before the last frost, while tender herbs should be planted outdoors only once the danger of frost has passed. In Montana, outdoor herbs are harvested between June and September. Take note of whether herbs are perennials or annuals. A perennial is a plant that lives more than two years, whereas an annual plant only lives one year. The local climate can impact whether a plant is a perennial or annual. For example, rosemary does not do well outdoors in cold winters, like in Montana. However, it thrives in warmer growing zones year-round and can become 4-6 feet tall.



Chives



Sage



## Activities

### Name that Herb

Source: *The Giant Encyclopedia of Preschool Activities for Four-Year-Olds*

### Ages

Preschool

### Objectives

Children will explore a variety of herbs using their senses (sight, smell, touch taste).

### Montana Early Learning Standards

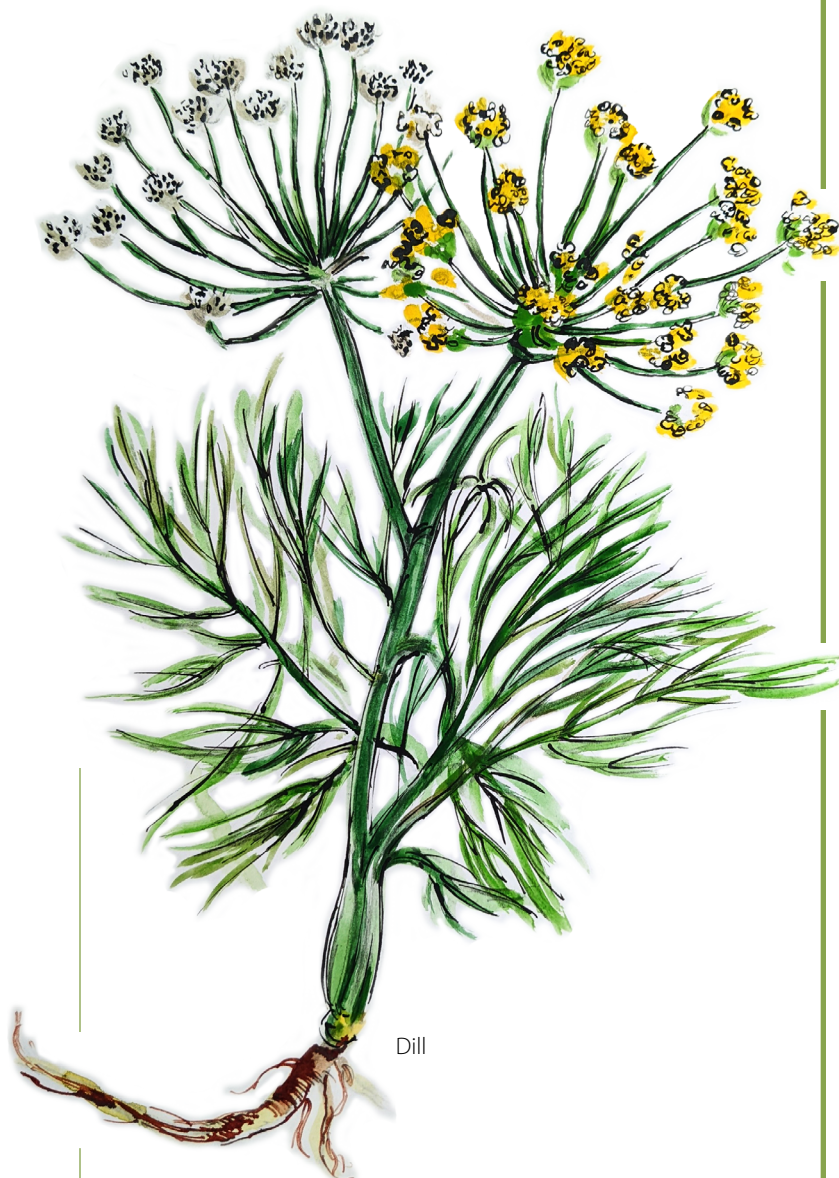
- Standard 2.3 Sensorimotor
- Standard 3.1 Receptive Communication
- Standard 3.3 Social Communication
- Standard 4.9 Visual Arts

### Supplies

- A variety of herb plants or bunches, such as oregano, mint, and dill.
- White index cards (one for each child) to use as a sample plate for the herbs
- White paper to use for drawing and writing
- Pencils and crayons for drawing and writing

### Directions

- Gather children at a table or meeting area.
- Show each herb and tell its name.
- Focus on sight: Ask children what they notice about each herb. What shape is each plant? What color? Is the herb bigger than their hand? Their finger?
- Focus on smell: Put a small sample of each herb on the index cards (one for each child). Ask the children to describe the smell of each herb. Ask the children what the herb smells like. They might identify the mint as gum, the oregano as pizza, and the dill as pickles. Explain that these herbs are ingredients in these items.
- Focus on touch: Using the same index card samples, invite children to gently feel each herb and encourage them to describe how it feels e.g., soft, scratchy, fragile, sturdy.



- Focus on taste: Using the same index card samples, encourage the children to take a small taste. Use a thumbs up (love), thumb side (like), or thumbs down (not my favorite) for the taste test.

### Extensions:

- Ask the children to draw their favorite of the herbs and to write the name of the herb.
- Muddle the mint leaves in a pitcher, add lemonade or iced tea, and pour into small cups for the children to try.



## Recipes

### Melon Mint Salad

Source: John C. Stalker Institute ([johnstalkerinstitute.org](http://johnstalkerinstitute.org))

#### Servings

6

#### Ingredients

1 1/2 tsp Honey  
1 1/2 tsp Lemon juice  
1 lb Watermelon, *cubed*  
1 lb Honeydew, *cubed*  
1 lb Cantaloupe, *cubed*  
2 Tbsp Fresh mint leaves, *chiffonade or minced*

#### Preparation

1. In a small bowl, combine honey and lemon juice. Stir well and set aside.
2. Wash the outside of each melon.
3. Cut away melon rinds and cut melon into 1 inch cubes.
4. In a large bowl, add melon cubes and combine. Pour honey and lemon mixture over melon and mix lightly to combine.
5. Sprinkle mint over melon mixture and mix lightly to combine.
6. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use or serve immediately.



Mint

### Nut Free Basil Spinach Pesto

Developed by: Anna Holloway

#### Servings

6

#### Ingredients

1 1/2 cups Fresh spinach, *packed*  
3/4 cup Fresh basil leaves, *packed*  
1 Garlic clove, *peeled*  
1 Tbsp Lemon juice  
2 Tbsp Parmesan cheese, *grated*  
1/4 tsp Salt  
1/4 tsp Ground black pepper  
3 Tbsp Olive oil

#### Preparation

1. Place spinach, basil, garlic, lemon juice, parmesan, salt, and pepper in a blender or food processor.
2. Slowly pulse the blender or food processor while pouring in the olive oil.
3. Blend for 30 seconds or until smooth. Scrape sides of blender or food processor as needed.
4. Serve immediately with pasta, sandwiches, wraps, meats, pizza, etc.
5. Pesto can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or frozen.



Basil

## Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: [mtharvestofthemoth.org](http://mtharvestofthemoth.org).

## 4 Montana Harvest of the Month: Herbs



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, Montana Organic Association, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: [mtharvestofthemoth.org](http://mtharvestofthemoth.org).

Funds were provided in part by USDA Team Nutrition Training grants, USDA funds, USDA Farm to School grants, Montana Healthcare Foundation, Northern Pulse Growers Association, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana School Nutrition Association, Montana Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant, Montana Grains Foundation, Dairy MAX, Montana Pulse Crop Committee, Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.