

how to grow herbs

Choosing the Right Variety

There are many benefits to growing herbs in your garden, they bring culinary flavour, fragrance, beauty and can even help with pest control. Herbs are easy to grow and cheap to buy from your local plant centre, so rather than buy the short lived ones from the supermarket – grow your own at home so you have them on hand. It does not matter how big or small your garden is, as herbs can be grown successfully in the garden or in pots or containers. In winter, herbs grown in pots are portable enough to bring inside to a warm window-ledge. The golden rule for growing herbs is to keep them close to the kitchen – you will be inclined to use them a lot more if they are close at hand.

Generally herbs fall into two main groups and can be grown at certain times of the year –

Annuals: Basil, Dill, Parsley, Coriander/Cilantro, Borage, Chervil and Fennel, and more.

Perennials: Mint, Rosemary, Thyme, Bay, Chives, Sage, Oregano, Peppermint, Tarragon, and more.

Many of the herbs we grow in NZ are Mediterranean plants (eg thyme, rosemary, oregano) and prefer a hot sunny site with free draining soil and are usually hardier in drier conditions. Herbs such as Parsley, Basil, Mint, Coriander need a little more tender loving care and regular watering – if too stressed they will bolt to seed early in the season.



Planting Herbs

The right location is critical to the success of herbs and generally, that's a warm sunny site – the more sun the better! They thrive in light, free draining soil. Herbs are inexpensive to buy so start afresh in October/November and plant directly into containers or out in the garden. Alternatively you can grow them from seed using **Daltons Premium Seed Mix** – check the seed packet for guidance eg Coriander doesn't like to be transplanted and wilts easily, so should be sown straight into a shady spot.

When to plant herbs

Spring is a perfect time to renew your herbs as annual varieties go to seed at the end of the season. Perennial varieties such as rosemary or thyme, sage, marjoram need to be replaced every 3-4 years as they can become woody and produce less fresh new foliage.

Herbs to grow in summer

Popular summer herbs to grow are Basil, Parsley, Thyme, Coriander, and Rosemary. Start planting in Spring (October/November), and use replacement planting throughout the growing season as required.

Herbs to grow in winter

As you get to the end of summer plant herbs you may use during winter such as Mint, Parsley and Chives. These varieties are more robust and do best over the winter season.

Planting herbs in the garden

Prepare your site by digging in plenty of **Daltons Premium Garden Mix** or **Daltons Garden Time™ Vegetable Mix** to refresh the soil and help with drainage (this is particularly important if you have heavy/clay type soil). Dig a small hole and plant your herb, replacing soil around it and pressing lightly. Don't worry about planting herbs close together as they do well in groups.

Herbs can also be grown throughout your flowering garden or used under trees or shrubs – so long as the spot is sunny.

Planting herbs in pots

If you are planting herbs into containers ensure your pot or tub has drainage holes at the bottom. Use **Daltons Premium Potting Mix** or **Tub Mix**, both have a good mix of nutrients and provide good drainage.

Special Tip on Growing Mint

Mint is a wonderfully versatile herb, but is a prolific grower and can take over your garden if given the chance! If you have limited space then it's best to grow it in a pot. If you want to grow mint in your garden you can limit its reach by planting it into a plastic container which is 20cm across by 10-15cm deep. Cut out the bottom of the plastic container and plant it into the ground. This will contain the plant and help stop it from spreading throughout the garden.



Feeding and Watering

- 1 Water herbs regularly, especially ones grown in pots as they dry out easily.
- 2 Feed with a fertiliser such as **Daltons Goldcote Vegetable & Herb Fertiliser** every 4-5 weeks.

Herbs for pest control

Organic gardeners believe that by planting certain plants together, they can enhance or inhibit their neighbours' growth. The benefits of companion planting also bring about balance in the garden through organic control of pests and by attracting beneficial insects.

Herbs are a great example of using companion planting for pest control:

- Borage, dill, flowering parsley and rosemary bring bees into the garden.
- Basil deters whitefly when planted near tomatoes.
- With its pungent odour garlic chives help keep away pests such as aphids and beetles.



General Harvesting and Maintenance Tips

- 1 Pick your herbs regularly to stimulate growth, even if you aren't using them. The plant will live much longer.
- 2 To help stop herbs from going to seed, trim them as they come into flower. To retain a constant supply of young foliage with thyme, parsley and sage, do not allow them to flower by regularly clipping the bushes.
- 3 In winter bring your potted herbs indoors, but cut them right back first so when they grow again they are strong.
- 4 Rosemary, Sage, Thyme, Parsley, and Marjoram should be cut back just prior to spring growth to encourage new growth.
- 5 Even herbs you aren't using regularly benefit from being cut back, this will encourage new healthy tasty foliage.

Gardening Terms Explained

Annuals

Only lasts one growing season.

Perennials

Plants that live more than one growing season, usually two to three years or more.

Hardier/hardy plants

Robust plants that can tolerate severe conditions.

Bolt to seed

The plant starts to produce seed too early, often caused by the heat.

Free draining soil

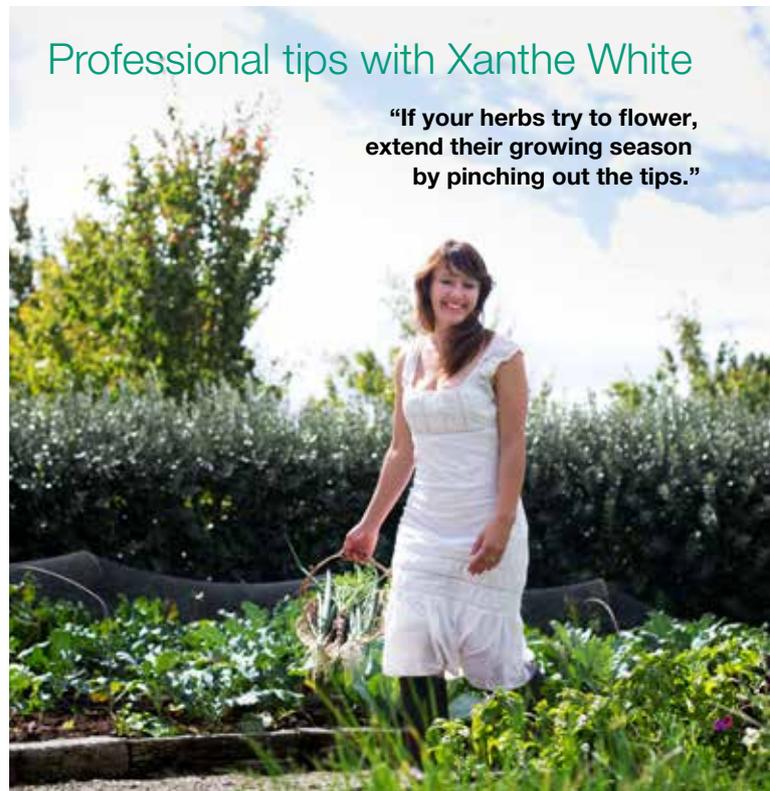
Soil that is light and well broken up. Water can penetrate the soil and drain without pooling.

Replacement planting

Planting the same plant again as the previous one comes to an end.

Professional tips with Xanthe White

"If your herbs try to flower, extend their growing season by pinching out the tips."



Products to try

Daltons Premium Garden Mix | Daltons Premium Potting Mix | Daltons Premium Tub Mix | Daltons Premium Seed Mix
Daltons Garden Time™ Vegetable Mix | Daltons Goldcote™ Vegetable & Herb Fertiliser