



# **HARVESTING HERBS for the MOST FLAVOR**

# Herb Life Cycle

- **Annuals “soft herbs”**
  - From seed every year
  - Life cycle in a few months
  - Killed by frost
- **Biennials**
  - First Season
  - Second Season
- **Perennial “woody herbs”**
  - Grows from seed or young plant
  - Fall – dies back
  - Spring – regrows



# Is it an herb or a spice?

## **Herbs**

Leafy, non-woody part of the plant

## **Spices**

Roots, Stems, Seeds, Flowers

# Herb and Spice from ONE plant!



# Dill Plant

**Herb – Ferny green leaves  
(dill weed)**



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

**Spice – Dried seeds**



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



# Parts of an Herb Plant

- Physical structures
- Flavor profiles
- Cooking times
- Different harvest time

(information generated by ChatGPT (OpenAI, May 2026))

# FLOWERS

---

- House the reproductive parts
- Attracts pollinators for fertilization
- Develops seeds to disperse
  
- Best time to harvest:
  - Mid-morning after morning dew evaporates, before hot afternoon
  - Flower fully opened



(Oster 1999)

Mexican Mint Marigold  
Maple Street Garden

# SEEDS

---

- Forms after fertilization
- Stores oils
- Roasted or crushed

Best time to harvest:

Mid to late morning

When seed head is dried



(Oster 1999)

# LEAVES

---

- Oils form in glands in leaves
- Add at end of cooking to preserve flavors
- Best time to harvest:
  - Mid-morning after morning dew evaporates
  - Seasonal timing

(Oster 1999)



Lemon Verbena  
Maple Street Garden

# STEMS

---

- Highly aromatic
- Packed with essential oils
- Soft: cilantro, parsley, basil, dill
- Woody: rosemary, thyme, oregano
- Best time to harvest:
  - Mid-morning after morning dew
  - Flower bud developed before opening
  - Seasonally



Cinnamon Basil  
Maple Street Garden

# ROOTS

---

- Anchors plant
- Absorbs water, nutrients
- Thin, fibrous or thick, woody

## Best time to harvest:

- Early morning
- Autumn after plant's foliage dies
- Early spring before new growth
- Perennial herbs 2-3 years old



(Oster 1999)

Cilantro Root  
Maple Street Garden

# Remember: Herbs are a big “Dill”



Dill Plant  
Lisa Ross's garden

# References

- Johnston, A. (2025, December 16). The Botanical Breakdown of Spices and Herbs: Leaves, Seeds, Bark, Roots. *The spice trader*.
- OpenAI. (2026). *ChatGPT (May 24 version) [Large language model]*. *Openai.com*
- Oster, O. (1999). Plant Parts. In M.K. Rogers (Eds.), *Ortho's All About Herbs* (pp. 7). Meredith Books.
- Schneebeli-Morrell, D. (2010). Growing characteristics. In G. Haslam (Eds.), *Grow Your Own Herbs In Pots* (pp. 17). Cico Books.

# Maple Street Herb Garden



# CHAMOMILE



# Holy Basil Tulsi



# Lemon Thyme



# Lettuce Leaf Basil



# Paracress “Toothache” herb



# Papalo



# QUESTIONS?

[bcmgtx.org](http://bcmgtx.org)

Big Country Master Gardeners on Facebook  
Big Country Master Gardeners on YouTube  
Big Country Master Gardeners on Instagram



Texas A&M Agrilife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University system, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts Cooperating.