



June Tips

HERBS

by Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

- Most herbs need no fertilizer and little water, so water only during prolonged dry spells. Avoid mulching herbs as mulch keeps the soil too moist. If fungus develops on your herbs during wet weather, cut them back to encourage healthy new growth.
- Comfrey improves soil as it grows! Dwarf English comfrey is especially good. The plants have thick, deep roots that are able to penetrate 6 to 10 feet down, breaking up the worst soils. For a very adaptable ground cover that is vigorous in spreading, try St. John's Wort or Aaron's Beard. It has striking yellow flowers, will live in dry soil, and needs little or no care.
- Many herb plants thrive in soils with widely varying pH levels. Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and common oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) are well adapted to pH levels between 4.5 and 8.7. Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) withstands a range of 4.5 to 8.4 and mint (*Mentha spicata*) 4.5 to 7.5.
- Chervil matures in six weeks and grows best when planted in light shade. Make successive plantings if you want to harvest it all summer.
- The best time to harvest most herbs is just before flowering, when the leaves contain the maximum essential oils. Cut herbs early on a sunny day.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dom, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist

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