

Grow Your Own Herb Tea Garden

EASY HERB TEAS TO GROW AND BREW

If you're not already growing your own herb garden, hopefully you'll be inspired to start! There are a wide range of delicious and aromatic herbs that can be grown for hot or iced herb teas and medicinal use.

GETTING STARTED WITH HERB TEAS

- **Chamomile (German)** – a mild flavored, relaxing tea that I've used hundreds of times over the years to calm and soothe the spirit and settle stomach aches and indigestion. It's also a great tea for helping you get to sleep. It goes well with a little honey and a slice of lemon. You can also use the tea as a hot footbath for tired or sore feet!



photo by Anne Gibson

- **Lemon Balm** – similar looking to mint and in the same family, with its strong lemon scent and flavor, it is known as the “happy herb” because it helps you stop feeling sad and blue! Lemon balm soothes the nervous system and lifts the spirits. A famous Greek physician, Galan, once said: “Lemon balm doth maketh the heart merry.” It also eases simple colds, coughs, and fevers; is calming, relaxing, and refreshing (great to soothe crying babies); and students have found it helps clear the head, sharpen the memory, and calm nerves when they drink it before and during exams! All great reasons to grow this fragrant herb!

CHILDREN'S HAPPY POTION RECIPE

Leslie Tierra, in her wonderfully inspiring *A Kid's Herb Book*, shares this useful recipe for “Children's Happy Potion” (although it's just as easily used for adults too)!

To make the tea, infuse or steep 1 teaspoon of fresh lemon balm and ½ teaspoon of chamomile in 1 cup of boiled water. Infuse for a few minutes, strain, and sweeten to taste.

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TEA PARTY GARDEN THEME IDEAS

- **Mint** – One of the easiest herbs to grow, mint makes a wonderful iced tea drink as well as hot herb tea. Crush, snip, or bruise the leaves to release the essential oils.
- Great for summer, an idea shared in Sharon Lovejoy's wonderfully entertaining book, *Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots*, is to harvest a handful of fresh mint, cover with cold water, and put it outdoors in a sunny spot to infuse and "brew" for about 3-4 hours. Bring the "sun tea" inside, strain, and chill in the fridge. [Read these tips](#) to ensure no bacteria grows in the sun tea.
- Try other flavored mints like pineapple, apple mint, or spearmint leaves for a different flavor.
- **Floating flower or herb ice cubes** - Another idea is to add ice cubes to the tea. Make flower ice cubes by boiling water and then cooling it before pouring into an ice cube tray. Add mint flowers or other edible herb flowers or petals after washing thoroughly.
- **Fruit ice cubes** – Alternatively, add a piece of fruit to each cube and freeze well. Add a straw to each glass, pour in the 'sun tea,' add a floating flower, fruit, or mint ice cube and serve the iced tea with a fresh sprig of mint.



TIPS FOR MAKING HERB TEAS

One of my favorite books from our home library is [*How Can I Use Herbs in My Daily Life*](#) by Isabell Shipard. It has a wealth of information – here are a few suggestions for making herb teas:

- “Keep the lid on the teapot to prevent beneficial essential oils from being lost by vaporizing.”
- “With aromatic teas, take time to enjoy the fragrance coming from the tea – the aroma activates vitality and a feeling of well being.”
- Drink herb teas without milk, but if you have a sweet tooth, “add a little honey, licorice root, or stevia.”
- Add chilled herb tea to fruit juices for a variation. Herb teas go well with pineapple, orange, passionfruit, and mango juice.
- During winter, hot herb tea can be kept warm all day in a Thermos flask – “this is a useful way to make up the day’s dose when taking an herb therapeutically.”

“Each garden has its own surprise.”

Susan Allen Toth, *My Love Affair with England* (1992)

ARTICLE BY ANNE GIBSON

Anne Gibson is a speaker, writer, consultant, and community educator teaching people how to grow productive edible gardens in containers and urban spaces. You can follow her easy DIY tutorials and inspiring ideas on her website, [The Micro Gardener](#), as well as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

