



# Columbia Nursery

## Herb Planting & Care Guide for Northwest Montana (Zones 3-5)

### Introduction

Growing herbs in Northwest Montana is a great way to enjoy fresh, homegrown flavors throughout the summer and preserve herbs for year-round use. Many herbs thrive in our climate with proper care and seasonal timing.

### General Herb Growing Tips

- USDA Zones: 3-5 (some herbs are annuals, others are hardy perennials)
- Sun Requirements: Most herbs prefer full sun (6-8 hours per day). Partial sun is acceptable for shade-tolerant varieties like mint or parsley.
- Soil Needs: Well-drained soil, enriched with compost. Avoid heavy clay or soggy areas.
- Watering: Herbs prefer moderate watering. Allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings to avoid root rot.
- Container Growing: Most herbs grow well in pots, hanging baskets, or raised beds.

### Recommended Herbs for NW Montana

Herb	Type	Perennial/Annual	Notes
Basil	Warm season	Annual	Start indoors; frost sensitive
Parsley	Cool season	Biennial (grown as annual)	Good for partial shade
Cilantro	Cool season	Annual	Bolt-resistant varieties last longer
Dill	Cool season	Annual	Direct seed; reseeds easily
Chives	Hardy	Perennial	Great in pots or garden beds
Mint	Hardy	Perennial	Spreads aggressively; plant in containers
Oregano	Hardy	Perennial	Thrives in poor soil
Thyme	Hardy	Perennial	Drought tolerant once established
Sage	Hardy	Perennial	Prefers dry soil



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Rosemary*	Tender	Tender Perennial	Must be overwintered indoors
Lemon Balm	Hardy	Perennial	Can spread like mint

## Starting Herbs from Seed

### Indoor Starting (Recommended for Tender Herbs)

- When: Mid-April to early May
- Herbs to Start Indoors: Basil, parsley, cilantro (optional), chives
- Containers: Use seed trays or 4-inch pots with good drainage
- Care: Provide warmth (65-75°F) and strong light

### Direct Sowing Outdoors

- When: After last frost, typically June 1-15
- Herbs to Direct Sow: Dill, cilantro, parsley, chives, mint (root divisions), lemon balm
- Soil Temp: 60°F minimum for germination

## Planting Nursery Starts

- When: After last frost (June 1-15)
- How:
  - - Dig a hole the same size as the pot
  - - Gently remove plant and loosen roots
  - - Plant at the same depth as in container
  - - Water deeply after planting

## Ongoing Care & Maintenance

Task	Guidance
Watering	Moderate; do not overwater
Harvesting	Pick leaves regularly to encourage growth
Fertilizing	Minimal; herbs prefer lean soil
Weeding	Keep beds tidy to reduce competition
Pruning	Pinch flower buds to prolong leaf production



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## Overwintering & Season Extension

- Perennial Herbs: Mulch around the base in late fall for winter protection.
- Tender Herbs (Basil, Rosemary): Bring indoors before first frost.
- Container Herbs: Move pots to a protected location in cold weather.

## Harvest & Storage

- Fresh Use: Snip leaves as needed throughout the season.
- Drying: Air-dry or use a dehydrator for winter use.
- Freezing: Chop and freeze in ice cube trays with water or oil.

## Quick Reference Calendar

Task	Approximate Dates
Start Seeds Indoors	April 15-May 1
Transplant or Direct Sow	June 1-15
First Harvest	Mid-June onward
Ongoing Harvest	July-September
Overwinter Perennials	October

### Need Help?

Visit our garden center for herb starts, seeds, and growing supplies! Our team is happy to help you select the best herbs for your Montana garden.