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# Heavenly HERBS

Herbs have got to be one of the easiest plants to grow and with the most versatile of uses. You can grow them outdoors in containers, create a knot garden using box hedging or a potager. Indoors, a simple windowsill in the sun will do, where they can grow for longer than if they were outdoors. They can be grown for their flower, or their flavour and often have therapeutic uses toward health and healing.

As long as you have access to sunshine, shelter and water you have the possibility of growing these wonderfully scented plants almost anywhere and where they are grown outdoors they attract bees.

Here's a list of useful herbs that grow here in the North-east of Scotland and their various uses.

Words: Kirsty McLean

**Chives (*Allium Schoenoprasum*):** *leaves and flowers* Part of the same botanical family as onions, shallots, leek and garlic, they grow from a bulb. This hardy perennial has long flowering vibrant purple blossoms and can also be used for a wide range of culinary purposes. Known for their many essential minerals including potassium, calcium and iron they are also high in folic acid and Vitamins A, C, B-6 and Magnesium.

**Sage (*Salvia officinalis*):** *leaves and flowers* Garden sage contains the powerful compound thujone that controls profuse perspiration and dries up lactation. Sage tea is a traditional remedy for sore gums and throat, skin infections and insect stings, and for sharpening the memory. Currently, *Salvia* species are being researched for their antioxidant properties, specifically for the prevention or treatment of Alzheimer's disease. It is wonderful with winter

stews or summer marinades and makes the perfect accompaniment for pork, beef, duck, chicken and especially roasted potatoes!

**Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*):** *leaves and flowers* Antibacterial, antispasmodic and antiviral, and can be used as an insect repellent and sedative. The leaf is used in tea, tincture and in the bath for its calming properties and pleasant lemon scent. It also adds a bit of 'zing' to simple salads and fruit salads.

**Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*):** *leaves and flowers* A fragrant flower as well as an edible herb, mostly used in baking. It possesses anti-spasmodic properties on smooth muscle tissue and a depressant to the central nervous system. As an essential oil, lavender can be used to treat burns, wounds, headaches and nervous tension.

**Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*):** *leaves* Analgesic marjoram oil reduces the pain associated with colds, fevers, inflammation, toothaches and headaches. Its leaves (don't use the stems) go with almost all meats, game and poultry. It's widely used in Mediterranean and North American cookery.

**Mint (*Mentha* spp.):** *leaves and flowers* Leaves are used in tea for their flavour and bath blends for their stimulating properties and fragrance. Mint leaves are also taken in tea to aid digestion, reduce gas and treat headache, colds and fevers. Best grown in a pot whether outside or indoors... unless you want a border invasion!

**Caution:** It is important that pregnant or nursing women who are considering using herbs medicinally should consult their health care professional first.