

Chapter 1 - Herbal Profile

What do you think of when you hear the word *herb*: medicine, cooking, or perfume? It conjures a diversity of meanings and thoughts to different people. To some people it appears to be only associated with cooking; while to others, medicine and health issues come to their minds.

Many times I am introduced as an 'herb gardener'. I have found that the return salutation quite often defines how the person pictures herbs. "Hi Jon, *I just love cooking with fresh herbs*" definitely relates to culinary herbs;

Each of us has an image in our minds eye of an herb. It might be that earthy smell of sage being added to the Thanksgiving dressing. To some it is the soothing feel of a sprig of Aloe Vera being rubbed on a fresh burn. It might be a scented candle as it burns giving off its delightful fragrance.

Herbs are found in the kitchen, workshop and medicine cabinet. They color fabrics, provide medicines, add fragrances to perfumes, soaps, and cleaning materials.

Herb Definition

A plant that some part of it (seeds, leaves, bark, roots, fruit, flower, buds) is used or has been used to:

- Enhance the flavor of foods
- Promote healthcare
- Add fragrance to perfumes, soaps, cleaning materials
- Create dyes and tints

Note that the definition encompasses plants "used today" or plants that were "once used". This definition creates four categories:

1. Culinary
2. Medicinal
3. Fragrance
4. Dyes & Coloring

How do YOU say Herb?

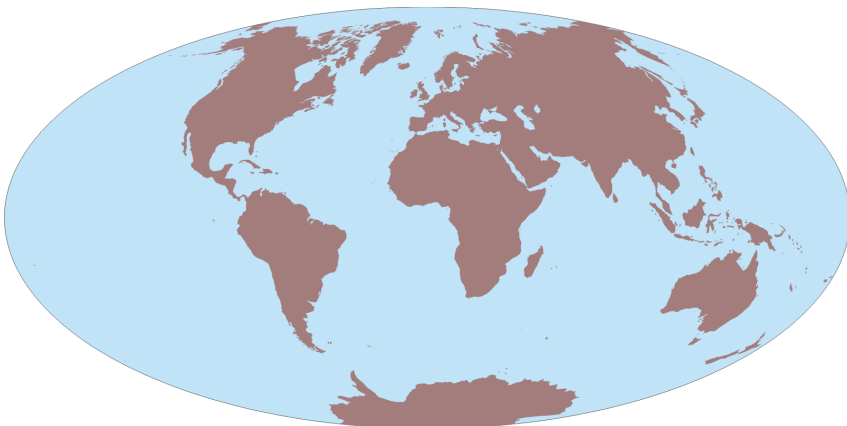
Herb aficionados quite often will insist that the word herb must be pronounced with the *h* sound. Several of my herbal seminars have been interrupted by enthusiastic 'word smiths' to call to my attention to the fact that I am pronouncing *herb* incorrectly. "It has an *h* sound," I am told. With candor, I inform the 'word techies' that they are neither right nor wrong.

My dictionary tells me that the origin of the word *herb* comes from the Latin word *herba*. It then evolved into French and found its way into Old English. Its first letter was *h* in all these languages. Etymologists tell us that pronunciation of the word *herb* without the *h* sound was common across all these languages up to the 19th century. Then British English started to pronounce the *h* sound. Why? I do not know, but William Shakespeare states it best:

*"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."*

Is it an Herbs or a Spices?

These two words are used interchangeably by many people. Herbs bought at the store are usually said to be stored in the kitchen 'spice rack' or the 'spice drawer'. Have you ever



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heard it referred to as an 'herb rack'. Conversely, I have never heard anyone say they were going to the 'spice garden' to collect herbs for the evening supper. It is referred to as the herb garden. Under this analogy sage (*Salvia officinalis*) bought from the store would be a spice. While sage gathered in the garden would be an herb. (Sage is categorized as an herb not a spice.)

The word spice is derived from the Latin word species which referred to wares or articles traded in the streets. European's established spice trade routes with China & India as early as 500 b.c. The early spices as they were called came from the parts of the plants that would be preserved over their long journey. Leaves were more perishable and were not transported over these long land routes. We generally think of spices originating from tropical regions of the world.

Spices are categories of herbs that are used for culinary purposes; They are derived from the seed, fruit, flower, bark or root of the plant. Culinary herbs that derive from the leaf of the plant are referred to as herbs. Medicinal plants are referred to as herbs no matter what part of the plant they come from.

Example of Spices

Plant Part	Name of Spice
seed	Dill, Coriander, Black pepper
fruit	Red Pepper (Paprika)
flower	Clove, Saffron, Jasmine
bark	Cinnamon
root	Ginger

Differentiating Herbs from Spices

Herbs	Spices
Leaves	seeds,roots,flowers,bark
Grown in temperate areas	Grown in tropics

For millenniums herbs have been sought after. Wars have been fought over them. Ransoms have been paid with them. Diseases have been stopped because of them, and fortunes have been made and lost with them

Chapter 2 - Essential Oils

Herbs produce a diversity of chemical structures that have been used for medicine and perfumes. An individual herb can contain over 1000 different chemicals.

Brush up against a scented geranium or a rosemary plant and the air is filled with beautiful aromas. Chew a sprig of peppermint and your taste buds come alive. Peel an orange and its effervescent odor fills the air. Trim a spruce bow and the smell conjures images in your mind of Christmas.

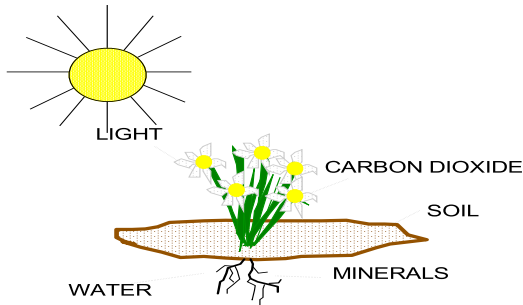
Many memories are etched in our mind from experiences formed from smell and taste. To me the smell of Nasturtiums brings pleasant thoughts of my mother. Its pungent-earthy smell reminds me of the time she showed me how to harvest their seeds. The scent of the perfume Tabu® reminds me of my wife. A whiff of it takes my mind back to that October 1962 Friday evening at a Monroe High School dance where we were introduced & fell in love.

Plants are complex Factories

Plants are the only organisms that can take elements, air, and sunlight and create food. God has truly created plants as the center of his creation to maintain life. They provide food &

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oxygen as the true staff of life to animals and humans.



Plants are complex factory that produces thousands of chemicals. These chemicals are used in the plants metabolic process of life. Plants usually produce more than they can use resulting in them storing the chemicals in the tissue and glands of the plant.

Essential Oils

Fixed oils and essential oils are derived from plants tissue. They are obtained by a process called cold pressing. The plant tissue is pressed and out comes a liquid oil. Examples of fixed oils are olive oil and corn oil.

Essential oils are also an integral part of the plants tissue but when they are crushed or pressed they are emitted as aromas. Essential oils are highly volatile meaning that they easily evaporate when they are crushed or pressed. This is why when you rub a Rosemary twig it emits its herbal smell into the air.

Essential oils are used by the plant to attract pollinators and ward off predators. Plants like the walnut create and excrete chemicals that prevent other plants from growing near them.

Flavors and Fragrances

Fragrance and scent compounds are stored in essential oils. To capture them requires a more delicate process than the

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cold press method. Cold pressing herbs would release the essential oils into the air and cause them to be lost.

Capturing Essential Oils

Essential oils are usually captured by one of the following processes:

Distillation process captures the essential oils by vaporizing them and collecting them in the resulting liquid that is formed. Only small amounts of vapor are formed when a plant is distilled. This is the major process used to capture essential oils.

Infusion is the process of extracting the essential oils by soaking the herb (usually the leaf). The may be water, alcohol, or an oil. The liquid is poured over the herb and allowed to soak for a time. The herb part is than filtered off. This is the same process used to make a cup of tea.

Decoction is similar to the infusion process except a decoction usually is boiled. This process is usually used to extract essential oils from hard parts of the plant like roots and bark.

Tincture is an alcohol extract of an herb