What is an Herb?

- "Herb" (Merriam-Webster)
  - A seed-producing annual, biennial, or perennial that does not develop persistent woody tissue but dies down at the end of a growing season
  - A plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, savory, or aromatic qualities
  - Herbaceous – adjective related to “herb”
  - Herbal – (noun) a book about plants especially with reference to their medicinal properties; (adj.) of, relating to, utilizing, or made of herbs

Remember

- ALL plants need what they need – are what they are
- Location, location, location
- Soil nutrients
- Irrigation
- Seeds or transplants
- Pests?
Where is Home?

- Many culinary herbs are native to the Mediterranean or other parts of the world
- Climates UNLIKE much of the U.S. – southern California, yes

Full Sun?

- Minimum 6 hours, full sun
- Better oil production (flavor)
- Studier plants
- More flowers and/or seeds (if desired)
- But it’s HOT OUT HERE!
  - Bolt when summer arrives: cilantro, parsley
  - Some prefer afternoon shade: chamomile, mint

Got Good Soil?

- Well-drained soil is critical for most culinary herbs.
- A few need wet/moist like comfrey, mints, parsley
- Native clayey soils?
- Amend with compost
- or... Plant in raised beds or containers
Bay Laurel

- *(Laurus nobilis)*
- Native to Mediterranean
- Full sun to part-shade
  - Flavor may diminish if too shady
- Moderate fertility and water to establish
- Slow to start – transplants best
- Evergreen, but needs winter shelter – grow in pots

Rosemary

- *(Rosmarinus officinalis)* – shrub 3-5 feet
  - Prune to maintain closer to 3-feet – and slightly open
  - (R. prostrates) – less cold-hardy, trailing species
- Native to Mediterranean
- Moderate soil fertility and moisture – Full sun
  - Needs consistent moisture to establish
  - Soil drainage is critical
  - Prefers higher pH – up to 7.8
- Grow from transplants – several varieties
- Cold-hardy varieties or grow in pots
- Blooms spring and summer – edible flowers

Chives

- *(Allium schoenoprasum)*
- Native to Asia – grow similar to vegetables
  - Moderate fertility – after flowers
  - Consistently moist soil – well drained
- Full sun
- Buy seeds from trusted sources
  - Transplants are dependable
- Hardy perennial – seldom reseeds
- Blooms spring – edible flowers
**Fennel**

- (Foeniculum vulgare) Common fennel, and bronze variety
- Native to Mediterranean
- Common fennel – moderate fertility and moisture
- Full sun – grow from seeds or transplants
- Common fennel is very hardy perennial
- Blooms summer – edible flowers and seeds
- Pests? – host plants for anise swallowtail and black swallowtail butterfly caterpillars

**Mexican Tarragon**

- (Tagetes lucida) Mexican mint marigold, or Texas tarragon
- Native to Mexico and Central America
- Moderate fertility – before flowers
- More drought tolerant – well drained
- Full sun
- Grow from seeds or transplants
- Heat and drought tolerant
- Perennial if grown in pots
- Blooms summer – edible flowers – leaves similar taste to tarragon

**Lemon Balm**

- (Melissa officinalis) Native to south-central Europe, the Mediterranean, Iran, and Central Asia
- Moderate fertility and water
- Full sun
- Grow from seeds or transplants
- Hardy perennial – divide every 2-3 years
- Cousin to mint, but has clumping habit
- Tasty for tea
Mints?

- *(Mentha species)* – many!
- Native to diverse habitats, Europe and Asia
  - Prefers rich, moist/wet soil – more than other culinary herbs
- Part shade is best – tolerates sun with proper watering
- Grow from transplants only
- Very hardy perennial – try containers
- Spreading habit – love them or hate them?
- Tasty in beverages and desserts

Parsley

- *(Petroselinum crispum)* – varieties flatleaf and curly
- Native to Southern Europe and North Africa
  - Grow as carrots – rich, moist soil – well drained
- Full sun or part shade
- Grow from seeds (takes 2-3 weeks) or transplants
- Biennial – semi-evergreen
- Good source of vitamins A, K, and C
- Pests? – caterpillars and leaf miners

Sweet Basil

- *(Ocimum basilicum)*
  - 25+ basil varieties – some spicy – some colorful
  - Numerous other species of Ocimum
- Native to tropical/temperate regions from central Africa to Southeast Asia
- Full sun or part shade
- Moderate moisture and fertility
- Grow from seeds or transplants
  - Wait until ALL danger of frost has passed
- True annual – pinch/cut often!
- Used in numerous cuisines
- Pests? – foliar diseases, caterpillars and leaf miners
Pineapple Sage

- (Salvia rutilans)
- Native to Mexico and Guatemala
- Full sun or part shade
- Moderate moisture and fertility
- Grow from transplants
  - Take cuttings and keep indoors for winter
- Perennial if grown in pots
- Blooms summer – flowers edible
- Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds

Parting Thoughts

Remember

- Grow what you like – if it smells tasty, try it
  - (culinary only)
- Know what they need
- Most grow best in full sun
- Drainage is critical for many
- Container gardening might be best option
- Yes, they do need water and fertilizer – less is more