

# Growing Herbs For Profit

**A lucrative home based venture that anyone can do, part or full time (even without a garden)**

**Trevor Blake**

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## Introduction

The cultivation and use of herbs apparently dates way back to prehistoric times. The leaves, flowers, seeds and roots of these plants were used for medicinal purposes – in fact, as far back as 5000 BC, Sumerians used herbs in their medicine. To date, different cultures have particular herbs which they use for medicinal and spiritual purposes.

In today's modern culture, herbs are multifunctional. Their uses include:

**Medicinal use:** Herbs have been incorporated into medicine in different countries and cultures. China is renowned for making use of Chinese herbal medicine. Some of the drugs available on the market today are made with extracts from raw herbs. They are then formulated to meet pharmaceutical standards. Funny isn't it? We can grow these plants for next to nothing, but when they get added to a pill or a potion, they cost a lot of money...

**Culinary use:** Herbs have a strong aroma and flavour, making them a great addition to food, used by both chefs and non-professionals. Some herbs are made into powder or dried, or may be used in their raw form. Such herbs which are a constant in the kitchen are parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

I can't get the song Scarborough Fair by Simon and Garfunkel out of my head now...

**Herbal use:** Tea is a significant tradition in the United Kingdom. We sure do love our tea. Leaves, flowers or seeds can be brewed in water to make a relaxing tea. Some popular herbal infusions are mint and chamomile tea.

**Cosmetic use:** The use of herbs in cosmetics dates back centuries. Herbs are infused in lipsticks, scrubs, face creams, face masks, deodorants, shampoos, sunscreen and oils. Ayurvedic oils, which are derived from herbs, are widely used for cosmetic and medicinal purposes.

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**Religious use:** Certain herbs are sacred and are used by different sects and cultures. They can induce spiritual experiences – the Cherokee Native Americans use white sage and cedar for spiritual cleansing, for example.

**Health use:** By incorporating herbs into your diet, it is a step forward towards a healthy life because herbs are filled with nutrients and antioxidants. They can be taken as smoothies, side dishes or salads. Certain herbs are used to burn belly fat and lose weight, such as ginseng, turmeric and fenugreek.

Europeans use four times more herbs (or 'erbs as they call them. We say tomato...) than Americans, making it a high demand in the UK and European markets, giving you room to make a good profit. With so many benefits, herbs are a great addition to your garden. They are also an opportunity to start a home business and make money. Lots of it in fact. Stick with us and we will show you how.

Packed in this book is a lot of information that will help anyone grow a herb farm to generate a profit. Welcome to the world of herbs.



## Chapter 1

### Why Herbs?

Perhaps you are unemployed, or you have a 9-5 'job'; whatever the case, having an added source of income is a step towards financial independence. Having a business is a big step to take, but there are many benefits to growing herbs for profit, such as:

**Low start-up cost:** You don't need fortunes to begin a herb farm. The supplies you need are the seeds, starter plants, a few pots, a watering can, and a few other supplies which do not cost much. You can even make use of containers that you no longer use.

**Huge customer base:** There is a massive market for herbs. Different industries need it, so you have lots of avenues to make a profit. Depending on the herbs you want to grow, it can take you from three weeks to sixty days to plant and harvest herbs.

**Easy to grow:** You can grow herbs indoors or outdoors. They do not need much fertilizing and can withstand a wide range of temperature. They are also easy to maintain.

**Personal use:** While it is not advisable to dip your hand into the business pocket, you can also use your grown herbs for personal use, for your health, in the kitchen, and in other areas.

**Continuous life cycle:** You do not have to buy seeds after harvests as herbs have an annual, perennial and biennial life cycle. You can also harvest seeds from your matured produce, making your business extremely cost-effective.

**Other businesses:** Growing herbs can create other business ideas for you. You can start an essential oil business; you already have the primary ingredients, which are herbs available. You can also create a cosmetic venture using your herbs as the base; you do not have to go big. You could start with a block of soap or a lip balm. You could also go into the production of herbal tea. Just by having your herb venture, you can eventually bring in money through various avenues. However, concentrate on growing herbs to sell in the first instance.

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**High nutrition:** Herbs contain powerful nutrients and antioxidants needed by the body. This is why they are in high demand by nutritionists, pharmaceuticals, and even beauty companies. Cinnamon has cinnamaldehyde which helps in lowering blood sugar. Sage can improve brain function and memory. Peppermint relieves pain and can reduce nausea.

**A side job:** You do not have to quit your regular job to grow herbs unless you are ready to commit your time and efforts to your new money making idea. You can easily combine a herb growing venture with your 9-5 'job', raking in more income.



## Chapter 2

### What Do You Need to Grow Herbs?

Before you embark on any home business venture, there are several factors you must consider and things to be put in place. Starting a herb farm requires devotion, both mentally, physically and financially. To have a herb farm, you need:

**A location:** Starting out, you do not require a lot of space. Your herbs can be grown indoors with adequate sunlight in pots or containers. You can also grow lots of herbs in your garden or balcony, and if you have acres of land, you can go with that. We have a greenhouse, a herb garden, and a very large garage with a growing area to produce herbs all year round. Boy, I would love enough space for a poly tunnel or two as well!

Please think about that. Herbs do not need to be grown outdoors. If you have a garage, basement or shed, you can set up a grow room with LED lighting, and rows of herbs on shelving. That is more advanced, however, so for now we will stick with starting and building our new enterprise.

**Duration:** From planting to harvesting, the timeframe will depend on the type of herbs you want to grow. Basil takes about 8-14 days to germinate, and leaves appear 2-3 weeks after. Mint takes a longer time; they grow to a mature plant in 90 days. The time you will invest basically depends on the variety of herbs. However, once you get the ball rolling initially, there will be no stopping you.

**Plant cycle:** Herbs are annual, perennial or biennial. Annual herbs go through their whole life cycle from seed to flower and again to seed in a single growing season. These include basil and coriander. Biennial plants require two years to accomplish their life cycles (Parsley and Chervil are examples of biennials herbs). Perennial herbs seem to last forever, so you will have them around forever. Examples are fennel and mint.

## Chapter 3

### How to Grow Herbs

You can either grow herbs indoors in pots or containers, or outdoors in the ground, or also in pots. Most herbs grow well when fully exposed to sunlight. However, if the weather is hot, then plant them from your greenhouse into the ground outside, or keep the plant pots shaded. A greenhouse temperature, as you are no doubt aware, can reach 50 degrees Celsius in the summer. ~

When you are growing herbs from seed, you should plant them in pots or containers for ease of handling. When they are strong enough, transfer them to the outdoor soil, or transplant them individually into 3" (9cm) pots for selling.

Herbs grow best in well-drained, fertile, moisture-retentive soil. We use a substance called Perlite which is from natural siliceous rock. It speeds up the germination of seeds, and it helps to aerate the soil. We seem to notice a difference when we use it. This is available in our [Shop](#). Check it out.

#### **Sowing herb seeds in pots**

This is probably like teaching your grandma to suck eggs, but we will go through it anyway. Bear with me.

Choose your seeds. Decide on which varieties of herbs that you want to grow, then make the purchase. Ensure to read the seed packet for instructions.

Get your pots or containers, which you fill with good quality peat free potting soil.

Place the seeds in the soil and ensure there is adequate spacing between them.

Place pots in a warm spot where natural light can touch the herbs.

Regularly water the plants.

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Grow until roots have nicely filled.

Prick out the seedlings by gently holding the leaves, and using, say, a plant label to carefully prise the roots out of the pot. Replant into a 3" (90cm) pot, and water regularly. I like to keep mine shaded so that direct sunlight does not frazzle them.

## **Planting herbs outdoors**

First, prepare the soil. Since the earth might be dense, dig it up a bit with a garden fork or a similar farm tool to loosen it. This will allow any water to drain quickly, and the plant's roots will have no barrier in finding nutrients in the soil. You can make use of compost, mixing it with the earth. you can also dig in some spent potting compost to improve the quality of the soil structure.

Ensure that the soil is moistened with water. Herbs demand water. However, you should avoid overwatering.

Carefully, without touching the stems of the plants as they are too fragile and can break easily, remove the plant from the pots.

Place the top of the root under the soil surface.

Cover it with soil and press it gently.

Water the plant using a watering can or a hose with a fine spray attachment.

## **Harvesting herbs for culinary use**

The variety of herb will determine when you will know it is time to harvest. Mostly, the plant will be green and fresh with leaves and flowers and have an aroma too. Herbs are usually ready for harvest when they reach 6-8 inches (15 - 20 cm) in height. Cut off one-third of its branches neatly with a sharp knife. Let the cut be closer to the leaf intersections.

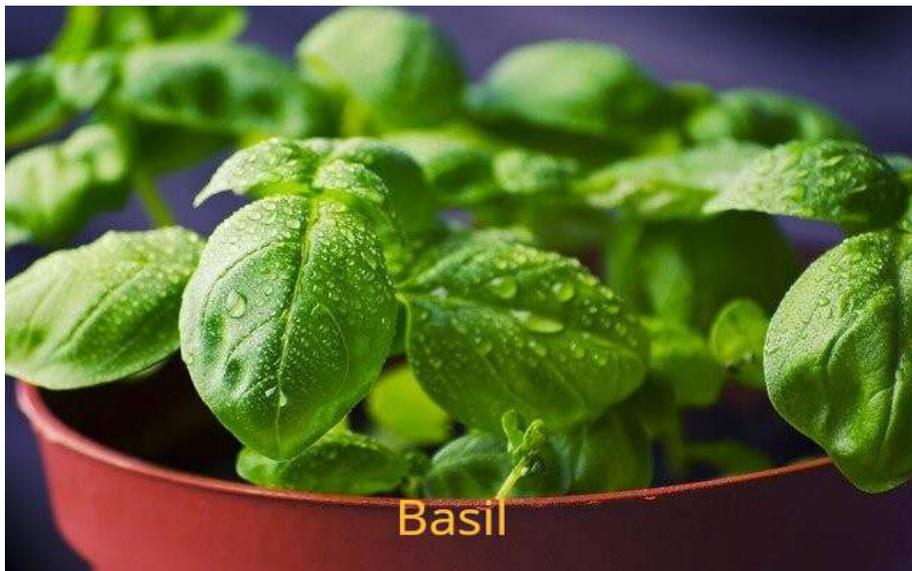
## Chapter 4

### Suggested Herbs to Grow

As a beginner, I am confident that you would want some suggestions about which herbs you should begin with before moving on to other varieties. Here are some herbs you should try out:

**1. Basil:** This is one of the most popular herbs in the culinary industry. Its name comes from Greece, where it means 'royal'. Basil should be grown in rich and well-drained soil. It should be planted in a place in your garden or plot that gets 6-8 hours of sunlight per day. Basil is a tender herb and should be kept indoors in the winter unless there is no danger of frost. It requires moderate watering. The best time to sow is February to April.

There are more than one hundred types of Basil - not all used for cooking though. This plant contains vitamins A,C,K. I personally grow half a dozen varieties, as they create conversation at my plant stand.



#### **How to grow/propagate Basil:**

It is fairly easy to grow basil from seed, but if you are impatient, like me, there's a much faster way to get lots of plants.

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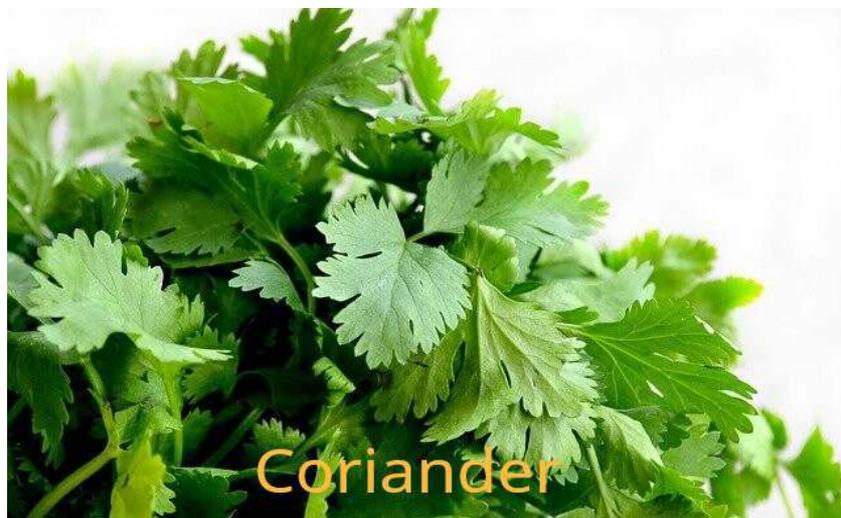
Get a healthy mother plant or two from the local nursery or even from the supermarket. You are going to take cuttings from it/them, so make sure there is plenty of growth.

Select a stem that is at least 2 or 3 inches (the longer the better). Make sure the stem is not in flower. Strip off the leaves, so that there are just two left at the top of the cutting.

Place cuttings in a jar of water, and keep it topped up for 7 - 10 days. You should then see lots of roots emanating from the cutting. Once the roots have formed, plant them in a good potting compost (preferably peat free), and keep them well watered.

Rinse and repeat! If done correctly, you will soon have dozens upon dozens of plants ready to sell.

**2. Coriander:** Another popular culinary herb. This herb is called cilantro in the US, but it is more commonly known in the UK and other countries as Coriander. This is going to sell out as it is a popular herb, so you should consider planting quite a few.



## How to grow Coriander

Coriander is good in so many culinary dishes.

It grows well in pots - however, if it is very hot, the plant has a tendency to 'bolt'. Keep the soil moist, and it should thrive.

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Some gardeners suggest splitting the seeds which causes easier germination. Personally I find that it doesn't seem to make much difference - but by all means give it a try. Simply sprinkle the seeds into pots or trays, and cover lightly with potting compost. Keep moist. When the seedlings appear, prick out by handling the leaves (not the stem) and plant individually into pots (I put several into one pot to ensure it bushes out nicely). As stated earlier, keep the soil moist for best results.

**3. Bay:** This plant is known as laurel. This grows well in pots and containers. It requires well-drained soil. Bay loves water, so you will be doing plenty of watering. It grows well in full or dappled sunlight. The best time to grow bay is April to September. Bay is perennial.



## How to grow Bay

Bay is a slow growing plant, as it forms a bush or tree. They can grow very big - in our home in Spain, our bay tree was 2 metres tall, and almost the same in width. Now in the UK, we have a much smaller bay tree in a pot. Personally, I stick with raising and selling the smaller herbs, but you may have space to grow a lot of bay for selling on.

## Growing Herbs For Profit

Find someone with a bay tree who will let you have some cuttings, or buy the largest Bay tree you can afford from a nursery. You need good healthy growth in order to take cuttings of 6" or so in length (15 - 20cm). Strip the lower leaves, so that there are just a couple of top leaves remaining. Cut the bottom of the stem at an angle, and cut the leaves on the stem by around a third.



Dip the cutting in a good rooting compound. Put all cuttings in a jar or container 3/4 filled with clean water. Keep the jar indoors, near a window, and change the water a couple of times every week. Tip: Once a week, add some hormone rooting powder to the water, and soak the cuttings for an hour or so to encourage rooting. Then change the water for some fresh, clean water.

Now create a great environment for the cuttings, by placing a plastic bag over the pot. Then, wait...you can expect to see roots forming in around 8 - 10 weeks.

**4. Parsley:** This is a sought-after herb, making it a good investment in your business. It requires well-drained, rich and slightly alkaline soil. It requires plenty of water. The best time to grow parsley is March to July.

You can choose to grow either flat-leafed parsley or curled parsley. However, you will find that they both sell well.



### **How to grow Parsley**

Parsley is grown from seed, in moist but well drained soil (similar to growing Coriander). Seeds can take 5 or 6 weeks to poke through. Keep the soil moist and you will not be disappointed. Simply thin out and pot on. There's nothing to it!

**5. Oregano:** Mention Italian cooking and oregano is sure to pop up on the recipe. Oregano (also known as Marjoram) has a great taste and aroma, giving more to its appeal. It grows well in well-drained soil and requires low watering. It loves sunlight, so have your plant exposed. The best time to sow oregano is March to May - and you might get some luck with oregano in June. Once again, it is very similar to Coriander and Parsley in the way that you sow and grow.



**6. Mint:** With a strong aroma that can be used for tea and flavouring, mint thrives in rich and moist soil. Mint grows and spreads so quickly, so it is recommended to be planted in a pot. Spring through to Autumn is the optimum time to grow mint. There are about 20 different varieties ranging from the common mint to chocolate mint and if you are shrewd you will go for the more unusual varieties to grow and sell, as they create far more interest.



## **How to grow Mint**

I think the question should be - how to not grow mint! It is really easy to grow - in fact, too easy. The plant is very invasive, and as such is best grown in containers to keep it from roaming all over your garden or plot. Grow it from cuttings (like you would grow Basil) or from seed. Easy peasy...

## **7. Rosemary**

Rosemary is renowned for its apparent ability to boost the immune system, and to improve the circulation of blood in the body. It is a very good source of antioxidants, and for its anti-inflammatory compounds. I use a lot of it because it apparently boosts the memory - and goodness knows, I need it at times.

However, the reason most people know about rosemary is that it goes well with lamb! It is also used as a spice, and the oil of the rosemary plant is used in beverages.



### **How to grow Rosemary**

Like Thyme, this herb originates from the Med, so it really doesn't like soggy, heavy soil. It loves the sun, and can grow very big indeed - which is great for taking cuttings to grow into plants to sell. Simply take cuttings, as you would do with the other herbs.

**8. Sage:** This is a popular herb in the culinary industry. It, however, takes a long time of 24 months to grow a mature sage, but it is a long-term investment, which will add great colour to your garden. Sage thrives in well-drained to dry, slightly alkaline soil. It requires low water and a lot of sunlight. The best time to plant sage is March to May.



### **How to grow Sage**

You can grow Sage from seed or cuttings, similar to all of the other herbs, so we don't need to go through it again. The thing to remember is that Sage doesn't need a lot of water to grow - so don't overwater it.

### **9. Dill**

We live in a small village in Norfolk UK, called Dilham. Our village actually got its name because it was a village renowned for the cultivation and sale of Dill! It shows that this herb was extremely popular in years gone by, and it supported a whole village at one time. It is still widely used in cooking today. It actually is a good substitute if you need parsley and don't have any to hand. Dill is commonly served as a sauce with Salmon, with a sprig on top for effect. And of course, you know about Dill pickles, I guess.



### **How to grow Dill**

You can grow Dill from seed, but it is so very easy to grow from cuttings. Just take some nice stems from the main plant, and pop them into a jar or container of water. In a couple of days, you will see the new roots starting to appear. When they do, pot them up singly. Nothing could be easier!

## 10. Chervil

Chervil (or more commonly known as French Parsley) is a very delicate herb that is widely used in French cuisine. It is similar in both looks and taste to Parsley. It looks similar to Cow Parsley that you see in country hedgerows every Summer. In fact, Cow Parsley is known as Wild Chervil, but do not try it as it can easily be confused with a poisonous plant called Hemlock. An interesting fact from history is that Socrates, the Greek philosopher was actually executed by being made to drink a drink derived from Hemlock. That shows you just how careful you have to be if you go foraging!

I digress...

The culinary herb Chervil tastes faintly of liquorice. It is worth exploring as a herb to grow and sell, as you cannot find it easily in the UK - therefore there is a market for this herb. Yes, I know you can get dried Chervil in the shops, but there's nothing like the real fresh taste of this delicate herb.



## How to grow Chervil

It is best to grow Chervil from seeds directly into soil, in the Spring and Summer. You need to sow the seeds regularly as the plant does have a tendency to bolt. It is an annual plant, so you need to start sowing it every year in Spring when the danger of heavy frosts has passed.

## 10. Thyme

Whenever I think of this herb, I am reminded of a sketch by the fabulous Tommy Cooper where he was standing over a cooking pot, putting stuff in it, and reeling off the names. Onion, potatoes, carrot, a bit of Thyme - at which point he threw an alarm clock into the pot...I guess you had to see it for yourself to find it funny too!

There are around 200 varieties of Thyme to choose from - so as I stated earlier, go for some unusual ones - the ones that you cannot buy in the shops.

Thyme can be grown at any time, so to speak. It likes dry soil, not the soggy stuff. It also likes full sunlight. you can clearly see that this herb is originally from the Mediterranean. Some people grow thyme to walk on instead of a path or lawn, and others grow it in gravel gardens.



## How to grow Thyme

This perennial herb is difficult to grow from seed. so grow it like you would grow Rosemary, Sage etc. by taking cuttings

Simples...

## 11. Chives

We love chives. We use them whenever we can - in cooking, and on salads, and in soups etc. They are so easy to grow too. you can eat both the leaves and the flowers, provided the bees don't beat you to it! They are apparently good for digestion, and lowering your blood pressure. Chives are perennials, coming back year after year. They prefer growing directly into the ground, but they also do okay in pots, which you can put on the kitchen windowsill.



## How to grow Chives

Chives can be grown from seed, but they need some form of heat to propagate. A warm windowsill is ideal if you don't have heated propagators. The seedlings should pop up around 3 weeks after sowing. There is really no need to separate them out, except if there is real overcrowding in the plant pot.

When grown in clumps, you can divide them up to refresh the plants.

## 12. Tarragon

In France, Tarragon is called The King of Herbs, and is widely used in cooking. Like Chervil, it has a taste of liquorice, albeit mild. One of its most popular uses is in the making of Bearnaise Sauce, but is also used to flavour soups, pasta (not French, I know) and it is used in cocktails etc. The 2 main types of Tarragon are French, being the stronger, and Russian (very mild).



## How to grow Tarragon

Follow the instructions for Chervil, Rosemary etc. , taking cuttings.

## Growing Herbs For Profit

To round up:

The herbs that I have outlined in this book are, in my view, the ones that are the quickest and easiest to grow (apart from Bay which is like watching paint dry) and which will give you the most profit. There are, of course, other herbs that you may want to consider as you progress, such as Sorrel, Fennel, Stevia, etc. There are over 300 botanical herbs, so I needed to stop somewhere, or the book would change into an encyclopedia! If you are mildly interested, take a look at the list of botanical herbs on the [Starwest Botanicals](#) website I hope the list of herbs that I have explained gives you some idea of the potential of this home-based venture. It really can be very lucrative and enjoyable at the same time - far better than sitting in front of a computer screen trying to find ways to make money online. Stay with me as we discuss what price to charge for your herbs, what markets to aim for, and other stuff I have discovered along the way.



## Chapter 5

### Pricing Your Herbs

The aim of your home business is to make a profit, without a shadow of a doubt. While you may have a love for growing things, you still want to make money out of this. Your profit depends on how your herbs are priced, and you set the standard. A great way to price your herbs is by figuring out how much you want to earn per hour of your time put into your home business venture. You might want to make £10 or £20 per hour. If you are growing half a dozen plants on a windowsill to sell to friends, that isn't going to cut it, is it? That is simply a hobby.

But if I told you that some savvy growers are making **hundreds, even thousands of pounds** per month from home, would you sit up and take notice? Of course, you begin small. And set a realistic price for your herbs, bearing in mind the cost of soil, pots, water, electric etc.

[Check out our shop](#) for a full range of the things that you will need.

(Clearly, we need to be as eco-friendly as we can get, but that has to be balanced with cost of production. So we have plastic plant pots, which we can use over and over again).



## Growing Herbs For Profit

Once you have bought your initial stock of mother plants, you shouldn't need to buy any more. The seeds that we sell are inexpensive - however, those costs still need to be taken into account. You can buy what is known as 'plug plants' online, which are tiny little plants. You then pot them on and wait for them to grow into bigger ones, and then sell them on - but in my view, it is cheaper (and more satisfying) to grow your own cuttings.

You have to weight up that one for yourself - but bear in mind that you can order plug plants online and get a load of rubbish - half dead, squashed plants that wont ever recover. It has happened to us a few times! Also, they might run out of stock. For example, as I write, I ordered some flowering plants for my borders in early March. It is now almost June, and they still haven't arrived. Loads of email apologies for the delay, of course, but little else. And as each plug plant costs around 50 - 70 pence by the time you take into account shipping costs - wouldn't it be better to grow them yourself for next to nothing? If just half a dozen plug plants are squashed or broken in transit, the cost for each good plug plant could rise to £1 or more, for a tiny little plant.

Take a look at the prices of plug plants from [The Black dog Nursery](#), as an example. It is a great company, and they sell a huge amount of plug plants both on their site and through eBay. Now search for Tarragon, or Dill. Check the price for a 3" plant (9 cm). Then add the delivery cost. As you will quickly see - you should grow your own from cuttings!



## Setup Costs

There is no need to go crazy, buying everything in sight. Your herb business literally can be set up on a shoestring budget, utilising things you have to hand, or that you can scrounge. We often go to the local nursery, farm shop etc. and beg stuff from them! They have mountains of plant trays etc., that they don't know what to do with, and will be happy for you to relieve them of some. (Plant trays are great for transporting your herbs in their pots). The one thing you must NOT skimp on is the potting compost. The better the compost, the faster the plant growth, and the quicker you make money. Buy large bags, not the piddly ones. I go for 70 litre bags, and usually, my garden centre has a 'buy two, get one free' offer - so look out for that. It is easy to work out the soil costs per plant - measure 1 litre into a measuring jug or container, and then fill up your pots. When you have used up the compost, you know exactly how much it will cost you per plant.

However, as you are a busy person - I have done the calculation for you because I am nice :-)

One litre of compost will fill three and a half 9cm (3") pots. A seventy-litre bag of compost cost me £5 - £7, depending on where I can buy it. If I buy two, I get one free (what a bonus!) Let's say it costs me £5 per bag. For the sake of argument, let's say we can get three pots out of a litre. That means we can fill 210 pots. Call it 200 pots for ease of calculation and to cover any spillage, etc.) That works out to 2.5 pence per pot. Call it 3 pence. If you are buying the pots in bulk - we are talking about a couple of hundred at a time - you can get them for, say, 15 pence each. Then add things like Perlite (for good drainage, which some herbs need) - perhaps some seeds, plus some plant feed, and your cost (if you do the cuttings yourself) will work out to 25 pence for each plant. We usually sell our herbs in the 9 cm pots (3" approx) and our larger, bushy herbs in 15 cm pots. The larger ones go for a premium - and they sell fast. There is something about a large, lush, bushy herb that cooks find irresistible!

# Growing Herbs For Profit

In a nutshell...

Cost per plant: Pot 10 - 15 pence

Potting compost 2 - 3 pence

Sundry items (plant feed, Perlite, etc.) 5 pence

Seeds if required 3 pence

Total cost: 20 - 25 pence per plant

## **Pricing:**

You can charge £1.49 to £1.99 per healthy plant in a 3" pot (9 cm). You can charge £2.49 - £3.99 per healthy plant in a 9" pot (15 cm). Even if you charged just 99 pence for a 3" plant at a wholesale price, **that equates to a 300% profit.**

Where else could you make that sort of profit for such little outlay or effort?

## **Basic Equipment to consider**

3" (9 cm) and 9" (15 cm plant pots)

Potting compost, preferably peat free

Perlite

Tool for pricking out seedlings

Plant food

Sprayer

Seed trays (preferably seed plug trays)

Labels

By the way – get a water butt with a tap if you have space for it. You can buy ones that fit onto drainpipes, and you have FREE water. Best of all, it is not chlorinated, which is better for the plants. Tip: If you need to use tap water, fill a watering can and have it standing for as long as possible to let the chlorine evaporate.

## Chapter 6

### Selling Herbs

Who are your customers? With herbs, you have a large market to cater for, and you can decide to supply a particular industry. On the other hand, by growing different varieties, you can provide different herbs to diverse audiences.

#### **Your customers are, but not limited to:**

**Restaurants:** Herbs like Thyme, Sage, Rosemary, and Basil are in high demand in the culinary industry. You will have to supply them fresh as this is when they have a great taste and aroma.

**Farmers markets:** You can sell a lot of your harvested herbs at farmers markets. There will be competition, but there's always room for more. Don't rule out craft fairs and boot fairs either. Herbs get snapped up at these events.

**Herbal and health food shops:** Certain speciality shops sell herbs and spices. This will be an excellent market for you, and you can supply these shops on standing orders.

**Catering suppliers:** Lots of catering firms would be really happy to buy fresh herbs to add to their dishes. Also consider food manufacturing companies. For example, we have a sausage making company in our area, who supply award winning sausages, containing various herbs.

**Beauty companies:** You can start out supplying in small quantities, but beauty companies usually require herbs in large amounts. This will yield a lot of profit. However, be ready to expand your farm and put in more time and resources. You might even decide to specialize in certain herbs like lavender and turmeric, which are in high demand in the beauty industry.

# Growing Herbs For Profit

**Local cosmetic manufacturers** (cottage industry type of businesses). These entrepreneurs love to experiment with their soap bases, and shampoos etc.

**NOTE:** To get to the level of selling herbs to a pharmaceutical company, you will have to operate a sanitized farm with specific standards. This is because of the nature of pharmaceutical drugs. This tends to involve significant capital into getting the right equipment and maintaining such a farm. However, the profit will be a success for your business. In my view, stick to local suppliers of beauty and health products - the cottage industry type of business.



Don't forget your local market either. If you live in a rural area, what better than to have a stand on the grass verge (with a securely fastened honesty box) where you can sell your herbs?

Now let's explore some other ideas to let your imagination run wild: If you go online, there is a website called [Next Door](#). It is where you can chat with people in your local community and inform them that you grow fresh herbs. You can even offer a local delivery service and build up a regular round (local companies, pubs, restaurants, etc. use Next Door too. It is free to register – and the key is to continually post messages on there, informing them of the different varieties, uses, etc. Also, you can let them know where you will be attending a craft fair, farmers market, or other events. For example, in our area, we have a local farmers market that meets on a Saturday. The stallholders post messages on Next Door to tell potential visitors that they will be there to sell their bread, cakes, eggs, veg, and so on.

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Of course – you can sell online too, through places like eBay, and Etsy. I went to [Etsy](#) to take a look. I typed in 'herbs'. The one that stood out immediately was a seller called FarmersOutlet, with almost 6,000 sales. Their first offering was 5 herb plants (as plugs) for £14.50. That's interesting! We've already worked out that our plants cost us about 25p each. Let's do a quick calculation to see how much profit we could make by selling a similar product on Etsy. The plant packaging costs 50 pence that they use.

Then there is the postage. Hold on – if we are packing the plugs into these mailing packages, this negates the cost of the plant pots, doesn't it? So the plants will cost about 10 pence each., a total of 50 pence.

Packaging 50 pence

Postage/courier – say £2.50

Total cost £3.50

Sell for £14.50

**Profit £11**

I also saw someone happily selling what they called 'a collection of herbs' – slightly bigger, six herbs - for £24.50. Even allowing for larger packaging at the cost of £1 and a slightly higher postage cost, you can quickly see that this seller is making about **£20 profit!** Check out Amazon too – search for 'herb plug plants'. You will find four herb plants for £15.

I am sure that you may figure out other places to sell your herbs. Gumtree? Craigslist? Facebook? Personally we find that we are busy enough with our sales to even have the time to explore other avenues, but you may think of some cracking ideas. The possibilities abound - just use your imagination. And keep in mind that selling half a dozen herb plug plants at a time is far more profitable and cost effective than selling them singly online.

## Chapter 7

### Plant passports

This is clearly a very profitable venture. However, there is a sting in the tale. If you are going to grow plants on a professional basis, you will need to apply for a plant passport from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). For Scotland, check with Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA). For Northern Ireland, check with Dept. of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Whilst this might all sound like a pain in the butt, we need to understand that it is necessary to monitor plants and animals' movement to detect and prevent infectious diseases from spreading. I do not think for one moment that the government is going to carry out a raid on the plant stall in the local village hall and seize your prize Basil - but as and when your business takes off, you may want to apply for it. Basically, when you apply for a plant passport, an Inspector comes round to your premises to check you are not trying to sell Japanese knotweed or something and that you keep your place tidy (as much as you can when potting up plants). Do not be frightened off by this. Indeed, it works in your favour when you register, as you can announce yourself as being a trusted, bona fide grower who is selling plants that are disease-free. You can actually charge a premium as a result, and it should be emblazoned everywhere. As I said, though, get your business off the ground first to make sure it is viable and is something that you want to do. The links you need to apply for your passport are at the end of this book.

#### IMPORTANT:

Apparently, you do not need a plant passport if you are selling plants to people at car boot sales, farmers markets etc., where the selling is done face to face, and the customers are buying plants purely for their own enjoyment and use.

See the [FAQ's HERE](#) which verify this. So it is only when you start selling online (at a distance, so to speak).

We hope that helps!

## Chapter 8

### Challenges You May Face

Like every business venture, do not expect an easy ride. The farming of herbs comes with its own challenges, which you should prepare for. By being aware of these challenges, you will know what to expect and quickly get over them, thus mitigating loss.

**Garden pests:** Herbs are often used as pest repellents, so it might seem ironic that your plants are affected by pest problems. However, herbs do fall prey to pests. Slugs and aphids are attracted to basil. To curb this, plant basil in well-drained soil. Do not grow or store dills close to tomatoes, as they are usually attacked by tomato hornworms. Mints suffer from flea beetles, spider mites and aphids. Immediately you spot the infected ones, get rid of them.



**Diseases:** Just like every plant, herbs can be affected by conditions that encourage disease. Mould, rust and bolt are some diseases that can affect your plants. These could be caused by overcrowding or poor and dry soil. To prevent fungal infections, ensure that there is proper ventilation and that plants are well spaced. Immediately you spot an infected plant, get rid of it to prevent the disease from spreading.

# Growing Herbs For Profit

**Overgrowing:** Herbs, like mint, proliferate and invade other spaces, inhibiting the growth of other plants. To avoid this, grow them in pots, tubs or containers and sink the containers into the soil.

**Waterlogging:** This could happen if the soil is not well-drained, and this can be caused by heavy clay soil. It can also be caused by overwatering, herbs are not houseplants, and not all herbs require regular watering.

**Yellow or brown leaves:** This can be caused by nutrient deficiency. This might be because the soil is too dry. Apply an organic fertilizer mix to boost nutrients.

Here are some helpful tips to help with your farm to ensure that you get a good return on your venture.

1. Do not overcrowd your herb plants. Instead, allow room for growth and ventilation. This will lead to a good yield.
2. Make sure your plants get enough sunlight. When placed indoors, have your pots close to a window or make use of LED lights.
3. Please carefully check that you are using the correct soil type for the herbs you want to grow. Any soil will not work for increasing healthy herbs. Purchase high-quality potting soil.
4. Eliminate flowers right away: Flowering signals that the plants growing stage had ended, and herbs will die shortly. To prevent this, get rid of the flowers by trimming them.
5. Prune your herbs regularly. Do not let the leaves grow wild. Start pruning when they are about 3-4 inches off the soil. When they grow back, prune. This procedure increases yield and creates a neat and lush farm.

## Chapter 9

### Herb Tips and Tricks

Here are some great tips for you, regarding the growing and selling of your herbs. We hope you find them useful.

1. Grow some nice smelling herbs among your carrots. The scent of herbs like Chives, Basil or Thyme will confuse the dreaded carrot fly.
2. Combine the herbs in the right groups. In other words, put the plants that like drier, sunnier conditions together, such as oregano, sage, thyme, rosemary. These plants don't like a lot of water. The herbs that enjoy more water, such as chives, parsley, basil etc., should obviously go in a different place. (Bear this in mind when planting groups of herbs into containers of course).
3. We always plant the herbs in rows. This makes the project easier, re weeding between plants etc.
4. Store herbs for your own personal use. There are a couple of ways. Firstly, we chop up the herbs, and put them in ice cube trays, with water. Freeze them, then simply take out a cube when you want to use it in your cooking, and pop the cube into your pot. Or, tie your herbs up into little bundles and hang them upside down somewhere warm and dry (if you have the space obviously).
5. To start off your herbs, grow them indoors to begin. This aids germination, and speeds up the whole process.
6. Herbs don't really like a lot of fertilizer. In fact, if you overfeed them in your desire to get bigger plants faster, they will actually die. Funnily enough, they seem to thrive on neglect - especially thyme and oregano. If they are given too much food and water, they lose their flavour a little.

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7. Increase your harvest of cuttings by cutting back regularly. This promotes growth, however, never cut plants back to more than a third of the plant in their growing season.
8. If a herb flowers then turns to seed, their growth cycle is finished, so you won't get any new growth from that plant. Dill and chive flowers and seeds are perfectly edible. However, don't let herbs like basil or oregano turn to flower, as this will make the leaves bitter, which you don't want.
9. When sowing herb seeds, please take note of the instructions on the packet regarding the planting depth. They simply won't grow if they are planted too deep. It's as simple as that.
10. Seeds like moisture, and they like being warm, in order to burst forth. A plastic bag or plant propagator will provide moisture. The top of a fridge will provide warmth in the bottom of the seed tray. You can of course also get heated mats if you want to be really posh.
11. Don't be tempted to use last year's seeds. Get fresh seeds annually. They don't cost much, and a fresh batch will germinate much better than last year's seeds for a variety of reasons. Why chance a poor crop?
12. Rotate your plants to make sure they are getting the proper amount of light etc. We do ours every 7 - 10 days.

## **An A-Z of Herbs**

One of the best resources that I have discovered for finding out all about herbs, is through a website called [Herb Wisdom](#). It is a really good, FREE resource. I initially began compiling my own list, then I came across the site whilst doing my research on a little known herb. Check it out. (It is in the resources section).

## Chapter 10

### How to Dry and Store your Herbs

Once you get up and running, you may well get a surplus of herbs.

Rather than putting them into your compost, there are several ways that you can store them. These methods allow you to have herbs all year round. Let's explore this.

First of all, gather your herbs in the early morning, when the plants have dried, and before it gets too warm. Also, harvest your herbs before they come into flower. In fact, whilst the herbs may look really pretty when they flower, it is best to cut off the flowers, which will ensure that they continue to produce new leaves.

**Dry Your Herbs:** When you dry herbs, it concentrates the flavour, so you don't need to use as much in your cooking as you would with fresh herbs. Wash the herbs that you have collected, and dry them on a paper towel or in a kitchen towel. Get rid of dead leaves etc. – you don't want those. Now tie them up into bunches and hang the bunches in a dry, airy place, such as a shed or garage. It takes about four weeks for them to dry properly. You can dry them using heat, i.e., a dehydrator, conventional oven or microwave. We use a dehydrator, as it is perfect for drying herbs. However, we only use it in winter, when the weather is cold. At all other times, we dry them in the sun.

**Tip:** If you are drying them in the oven, the temperature should be around 100 degrees. If you dry them in a microwave, put the herbs between two pieces of kitchen towel, and set the microwave on high for a couple of minutes. Do it in thirty second intervals, so you don't actually cook them. When you have finished drying the herbs, using whatever method suits you, take the leaves off the stems and store them in sealed containers. Our favourite method is to chop up the herbs (wash them first) and put them into ice cube trays. Add the water, freeze the herbs. Once frozen, put the ice cubes into freezer bags. Then, whenever you want some herbs for your cooking, take a herb cube out from the freezer, and pop it into the saucepan.

## Chapter 11

### Starting With Little or no Money

Is it possible to set up and run a herb venture, starting out with virtually NO money whatsoever? Yes, it is, without a shadow of a doubt. And we are about to show you. I reckon you could be up and running for £50 or less, if you are really shrewd. When Karen and I lost our conventional business in the 1990s due to a mini-recession in the UK, we ended up losing our house, our nice car – everything. The world came crashing down around our ears. We ended up in a rented two-bedroom bungalow – us, five kids, two dogs and a budgie. I am glad we didn't have a cat as there simply wasn't enough room to swing one!

So if you are living in a one-bedroom flat with a balcony as the only outside space, you can still do it. That is a promise. To get by in those dark days, I put an ad in the shop windows for gardening work, and Karen did the same to get cleaning work. And to cut a very long story short, it was the best thing that happened to us. Our conventional business (promotional sportswear) was going nowhere, and I had been working 12 – 14 hours a day to stand still. I felt like a hamster on a wheel.

Yes, it was tough to get back on our feet, with many more dark days ahead of us, but we haven't had a 'job' for 30 years now, and we answer to nobody. And since those days, we have made a fortune from our kitchen table ventures. We lived on and off for almost 20 years in our villa in Spain, in the sun. It had a large plot of land, grew all sorts of things, and raised chickens. We had hydroponics and an aquaponics setup and bred Tilapia fish. It allowed me to explore all kinds of things, including growing cannabis (the authorities turned a blind eye to one plant per household member – honest! People even grew them on their balconies, and we had two cannabis shops in town. Before you tut, we never smoked the stuff. We grew and ate the raw cannabis leaves in smoothies, salads, etc. (Cannabis leaves are incredibly beneficial to health). As an aside, you cannot possibly get 'high' on eating the leaves. I grew moringa – possibly the most nutritious plant in the world. I grew Goji Berry plants, Figs, Nisperos, Avocados, Melocoton fruits (like a peach) and, of course, the usual veg and herbs for the kitchen. It was a wonderful time.

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Eventually, we sold up and moved back to the UK, just before the world pandemic struck (a wise move, as it turns out) and now live on the Norfolk Broads, with a mooring at the end of our garden, where we can hop onto our boat, and drift off whenever we like.

And if we lost everything, we could start all over again due to what we have learned, working and earning for ourselves. I am telling you this, not to impress you, but to impress upon you that you can begin a venture on a shoestring and work your way up. When you do, the rewards are fabulous, and your life belongs to you. So let me show you how you can go from nothing (I mean, literally nothing but a few pounds) to many hundreds of pounds a month.

At the end of the day, though, it is up to you to take the bull by the horns and build a thriving home business venture. Let's find out how I would do it if I had to start all over again with nothing. First of all, I would look for some mother plants, or beg cuttings from friends and neighbours. Failing that, on my next shopping trip to the supermarket, I would buy one of those herbs in a pot – you know, the herbs in pots that people buy and stick on their windowsill in the kitchen, only for them to shrivel up and die through a lack of water from being totally pot bound.

I mentioned the website called Next Door earlier. I would put a message on there asking if anyone could spare any herb cuttings, with the promise of a free plant when they grew. I actually did this a while ago, asking for lavender cuttings. I didn't see why I should pay £3.99 for a small lavender plant from the local nursery – especially as I needed 20 of them alongside my path! I was swamped with replies – so that works (and I never even promised them anything in return).

So that's an excellent way to start. As we haven't got any money to spare, we can't buy potting compost or pots. So we do the next best thing – we grow the herbs that we can grow in water, and we use anything to hand – yoghurt pots, jam jars, old mugs, etc. And, as they say on blue Peter – “here's one that I prepared earlier” with some basil cuttings in an old jam jar, happily rooting. (I must plant them if I can tear myself away from this book)! Here is a list of herbs that you can happily grow in water on your windowsill:

# Growing Herbs For Profit

- 1 Peppermint
- 2 Oregano
- 3 Sage
- 4 Basil
- 5 Stevia
- 6 Thyme
- 7 Rosemary
- 8 Lemon balm
- 9 Chives

So, that's got you up and running. Within 7 – 10 days, you will have some rooted cuttings to plant. Whilst that is happening, you need to go and scrounge some plant pots. Easy peasy.

Again, look on Next Door in the For Sale and Free section. You are bound to find someone trying to clear away their old plant pots. If not, put a message on there asking for old plant pots. Many gardeners have dozens of them clogging up their sheds and garages and would be happy to get rid of some.

Here are some other places to try you can get some cheaply or for free:

Facebook marketplace. Gumtree. Local Car boot sales. Garden centres and nurseries (you would be surprised at how nice they are if you say you are looking for plant pot trays for transporting plants. They are likely to show you a store full of old plant pots and trays that they don't know what to do with).

Friends, relatives and neighbours. If you are not into the 'beg, steal, borrow' thing, get your starter pots from our shop. A tenner will have you up and running with plant pots.

There is an old saying – "Needs must when the devil drives". In other words, put yourself out there, look around, ask people. Soon, you will have more pots than you know what to do with! The one thing that you should not ever skimp on is potting compost. So my advice is to buy a good quality potting compost, and, as per our calculations earlier, you can get a couple of hundred plants out of a seventy-litre bag of potting compost. When you are at the garden centre, buying the compost, that's a good time to ask them if they have a couple of old plant trays etc., that they will be throwing out.

## Growing Herbs For Profit

So far, so good. Now keep getting cuttings, potting up, and tending your plants. Get the kids to help. If you haven't got any, borrow some. The next thing you need is enthusiasm. Buckets full of it. Trust me – this venture will work, over and over again. And you are on your way to oodles of money. At this stage, your balcony, shed or garage will be bursting with herbs ready to sell.

What we need to do now is – **sell them**. Your first port of call is, of course, Next Door, where you can advertise stuff for free. Take the pictures of your herbs on your phone, and upload them. Then, look for local craft fairs, car boot sales, farmers markets, etc., to sell your wares. At the time of writing, we as a country are emerging from the pandemic lockdown, so we will be free to spread our wings.



## Growing Herbs For Profit

Later on, once we are up and running, we can approach pubs, restaurants, catering suppliers etc. With our fresh herbs and build up a very nice round of people who need our herbs regularly. But there is time enough for that (and that is, in my opinion, the time to apply for your plant passports, when you know without a shadow of a doubt that it is something you want to do).

Let's face it – if you grow herbs and cannot sell any for some reason, you don't need to apply for the passports, do you? Okay – your first boot or craft fair might be a disaster, where you sell a few plants but barely cover the cost. There will be a couple of reasons for that. The first one will be a lack of footfall (prospective customers coming through the door, or it is peeing with rain all day) which you can do little about. Suck it up, as they say. It can happen. That's where your bucket of enthusiasm comes in. Learn from it. Figure out if you could make your display more attractive, whether you need to take a flask and some sandwiches next time so you don't spend money at their canteen, and so on. As you can see – we've been there, done it, and we've had times when nobody comes through the door. But it didn't stop us from making a fortune over the last few decades. If the reason for the lack of sales wasn't due to a lack of potential customers, then the only other explanation is – you. I make no apologies for being blunt. We have spent many days at these events and can pass on some tips (more often than not from our mistakes).

First of all, do not sit behind your stall, staring at your phone. Don't ignore potential customers because you are too busy chatting with your friend who is there to support you. Time and time again, we see stallholders sitting, hiding behind their displays, hoping that people will stop and buy. That's isn't going to happen. Instead, stand up, look enthusiastic (even if your world is crumbling around you like ours was at times) and engage people in conversation.

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It will go something like this: Me “Hi. Can I ask you something? Which is your favourite herb?” Customer “err, basil, I guess.” Me “That’s funny that you should say that. Virtually everyone has said the same thing today, and we’ve sold a lot. But have you tried this variety?” And away you go.

Or “Hi. Have you seen this herb that we have grown? It is creating a lot of interest”. And so on. Whenever we did events like these, we used to be hoarse at the end of the day but would sell ten times more plants than the other plant stands. That should tell you something. What should you expect to make on a decent day? That is an unknown. On the days that there was a decent footfall, we made fifty pounds. On other days, we made a couple of hundred pounds. One day we raked in three hundred and thirty pounds, but that was the exception. The more enthusiastic you are, the more knowledgeable you become, the more money you make.

**Big Tip:** When you begin, you cannot hope to be an expert on everything. So don't try to be. If someone asks you a question, there is a great answer that you can give that will get you out of trouble. Here's how it goes: Customer “Is this herb the Anthriscus cerefolium variety?” Awkward... Here's your reply “I don't actually know. But what I do know is that it is used in a lot of dishes/we sell a lot to home cooks/people buy it just for its looks and fragrance.” Remember that one. It will always get you out of trouble. Repeat after me: “I don't actually know. But what I do know is...” We have used this in so many of our kitchen table ventures, especially when starting on something. Nobody likes a smart Alec, but they do appreciate honesty.

The other thing a potential customer likes is to have their ego stroked. So if someone appears knowledgeable, ask them to relay that knowledge to you. “I've never heard of that herb or that way to use it. Can you explain it to me?” Above all else, LISTEN to what the visitors to your stand are saying. They may reveal a herb that you don't know about. They may reveal some uses for a herb that you can pass on. They may ask for a collection of herbs, the wholesaling of herbs, etc. And those suggestions will increase your profitability.

## Growing Herbs For Profit

As you can see, you can start from next to nothing and build up a very nice part or full-time profitable venture. Will it make you fabulously wealthy? I guess not. But It will give you the money you need to obtain a better lifestyle, which is in your control. It really is all down to you and how much you want to succeed. From a personal point of view, I don't know of any other venture where you could begin for next to nothing and make many hundreds of pounds a month. It could easily turn into an extremely lucrative family business – even your kids can join in. Check the resources section for an article about a large herb business to see just what can be accomplished!

Check the resources section for an article about a large herb business to see just what can be accomplished!



# Growing Herbs For Profit

I hope this has given you food for thought. Growing herbs is a business you should seriously consider. It doesn't require a huge amount of your time and resources, and it is profitable. In different areas of our lives, we make use of herbs. It can be a simple tea, mint toothpaste, or in our dishes, herbs are essential, and it would be great for you to take advantage of such an amazing gift of nature.

Not only will you have a beautiful garden, but the array of aromas is also an excellent way to repel insects and make your home a delight. Remember, start small. Do your market research and grow herbs in high demand or grow herbs you feel you will do well. Employ one step at a time, and you will gain experiences and learn lessons that are important in expanding your farm.

Growing herbs is easy as it can get, and is potentially extremely profitable. So make that decision today.



## Resources

### **Plant passports**

APHA (England)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/issuing-plant-passports-to-trade-plants-in-great-britain#plant-passports-and-certification-labels>

SASA (Scotland)

<https://www.sasa.gov.uk/plant-health>

DAERA (Northern Ireland)

<http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/plant-and-tree-health>

A-Z of herbs

<https://herbwisdom.com>

### [Herbs Unlimited](#)

A couple's herb business in Ripon, Yorkshire

## A List of the Common Herbs

### **Annual herbs**

Basil *Ocimum basilicum*  
Borage *Borago officinalis*  
Chervil *Anthriscus cerefolium*  
Coriander *Coriandrum sativum*  
Dill *Anethum graveolena*  
Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*  
Nasturtium *Tropaeolum sp*  
Savory *Satureja hortensis*

### **Biannual herbs**

Caraway *Carum carvi*  
Parsley *Petroselinum crispum*

### **Perennial herbs**

Bay *Laurus nobilis*  
Catnip *Nepeta cataria*  
Chives *Allium schoenoprasum*  
Garlic *Allium sativum*  
Lavender *Lavandula*  
Lemon Grass *Cymbopogon citratus*  
Lemon Balm *Melissa officinalis*  
Lovage *Levisticum officinale*  
Oregano (Marjoram) *Origanum vulgare*  
Mint *Mentha*  
Rosemary *Rosemarinus officinalis*  
Sage *Salvia officinalis*

Thanks for reading our book,  
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