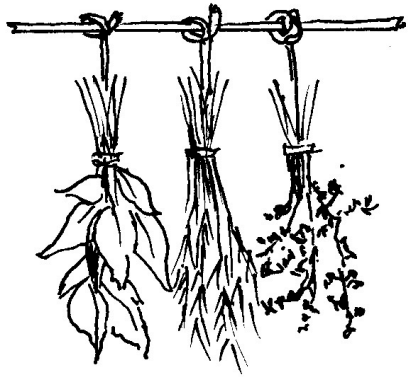


## PRESERVING HERBS



Gardeners can preserve herbs for use all year. We know that fresh herbs peak in flavor during summer, but New England summers don't last long. **Dried or frozen herbs are almost as good as when cut fresh from the garden.** They bring the sunshine and flavor of summer into winter!

### Harvesting for Preserving

Herbs pack the most flavors when picked before they bloom, in the morning after the dew has dried, but anytime you feel the need, pick away!

### Freezing Herbs

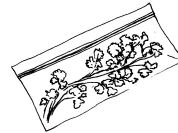
Freezing herbs is quick and easy!

- **Gather** leaves and short stems
- **Wash quickly + gently;** shake or pat dry.
- **Enclose in small freezer bags.** Leave air in as a cushion.
- **Tuck in the freezer.**

Freezing quickly captures the flavor and locks in the fresh look and taste instantly for enjoying months later. Freezing preserves the best flavor in **cilantro, chervil, chives, dill, fennel, sweet cicely, and tarragon.** When you gather herbs for a meal, harvest a little extra to toss in the freezer.

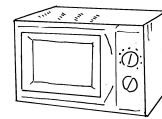
### Using Frozen Herbs

Remove the bag from the freezer just before use. Open the bag and hit it with your hand on the counter. **You have crushed the ice crystals in the leaf, and voila! – chopped parsley, cilantro, dill...** Remove the chopped herb leaves; put the stems aside (to be used to flavor soup stock). Sprinkle the herbs on vegetables, salsas, soups and salads. **Frozen herbs retain better color and flavor the less they are cooked.**



### Microwave Drying

Try drying herbs in a microwave oven. Wash sprigs, pat dry with paper towels. Remove leaves from stem, spread as a single layer evenly on double thickness paper towels. Cover with another paper towel and **microwave on high for 2 minutes.** Remove small dried leaves. **Continue drying at 30-second intervals** until all leaves are fully dried and brittle. **Store in airtight containers in a cool, dry place.**



### Air Drying Herbs

**Lavender, lemon verbena, lemon balm, lovage, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, and thyme** dry well. For prime flavor and color, dry and store quickly!

To harvest, cut the stems just below the healthiest leaves. Tie the stems in a bunch, about 1" – 1 1/2" in diameter. Use a rubber band, which will tighten as the stems dry. **Hang bunches out of direct sunlight.** Sun and high heat (>110°F) will destroy essential oils. Ideal conditions, such as in sheds and attics, include good ventilation, temperatures between 75°-110°F, and low humidity.

Drying time, depending on humidity, usually takes 3-8 days. When the leaves crumble between your fingers, herbs are dry. **As soon as they are dry or almost dry, put them stem up in a paper bag.** The bag absorbs remaining moisture and buffers humidity until you prepare the herbs for storage.

As you have time, reach into the bag and **strip the leaves from the stems by running your clean hands over the leaves.** Pour dried leaves carefully into glass jars, cover and **store away from the light** or use dark glass jars. Sunlight, heat and excess handling will destroy herb oils. Stored carefully, herbs will retain their fragrance, taste and color **for about a year** - just in time for next year's harvest!



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