A garden just has to have some herbs! Not only do herbs enhance the taste of our food, but they are also very ornamental and look as good in the vegetable garden as they do in a flower bed. Some gardeners develop small, sometimes elaborate, gardens containing just herbs; others may intermingle them with their vegetable crops. The seed racks are now full of herb selections and the garden centers have a good supply of started plants. The cooler weather that we can expect this fall and winter is the perfect growing condition for many herbs.

**Basil** is perhaps the first herb that people think of when they want to grow their own herbs. The colorful leaves, varied scents and vigorous growth of this herb are outstanding. Select large-leaved types such as 'Lettuce Leaf' or 'Genovese' for a more traditional basil treat. Purple-leaved basil is also available and equally beautiful - 'Purple Ruffles' is a good cultivar. There are also dwarf mound-shaped varieties such as 'Spicy Globe', and specialty scented varieties like 'Cinnamon' and 'Lime'. I usually start my basil patch by preparing a planting bed in a full sun to part-shade area. I broadcast the seeds over the approximately three feet by six-foot area and gently rake the seed in so that it is covered with a quarter-inch of soil. Make sure to thin the seedlings to six to twelve inches apart. You will get plenty of basil from multiple cuttings of this annual plant. Keep cutting it back to prevent flower production which will make annual basil go to seed. I usually have both a spring and fall crop which provides me with plenty of fresh and dried basil.

**Dill** is a great herb that can provide both leaves and fruiting tops that produce seed for seasoning. Dill actually grows best in the cooler part of the year in Florida and is ideally planted in November and December. While many dill varieties grow up to four feet tall, there are smaller cultivars available. The yellow flowers are followed by seed which is formed in about 65 days from planting. Sow the seeds just like basil and thin plants to about 12 inches apart.

**Parsley** is another herb that performs well for me during our cool season. While the curly types such as 'Moss Curled' are grown as a colorful garnish, the (Continued on page 2)
flat-leaved varieties ('Plain Leaf') are often used in cooking. There is even a rooting type called 'Hamburg Root' that is grown to be used as cooked vegetable in soups. This is another herb that I plant in wide patches thinning the plants to about six-inches apart. Parsley is actually a biennial as it produces foliage the first year and then produces a flower and seed the next.

**Rosemary** is very different type of herbs as it is actually a small shrub. In fact, I have seen gardens where rosemary was sheared into interesting shapes that bring an ornamental quality to the landscape. While there are many cultivars from short and spreading to spiky and upright, most rosemary plants are about two to three foot tall with dark green needle-like leaves and small pink flowers. Easily propagated from cuttings, rosemary is useful for its mild, bitter-tasting leaves that can be used fresh or dried.

**Coriander** is another easily grown herb in our area. Again, now is a good time to plant the seeds, about a quarter-inch deep just like many of the other herbs, and thin to three to six plants per foot. This herb has attractive flowers followed by brown fruits. The dried fruits are then threshed to remove the seeds used in cooking. The fresh leaves of coriander are called cilantro and are commonly used to flavor many popular dishes.

If you only have a small space, herbs also grow just as well in containers as they do in gardens. I could go on to describe many other herbs, but you will have to pick your own favorites. Check local garden centers or Internet seed catalogs for their herb selections. We have a great publication called "Herbs in the Florida Garden" which can be found at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02000.pdf](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02000.pdf), or pick one up at our office.

Resource:
