



# Redding Garden Club

## Garden Tips

### Herbs, Part 1

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By Sally Pfeifer

Herbs are a selection of plants that I have been interested in for many years. When I first got married, my mother would visit and we would go to Caprilands Herb Farm in Coventry, Connecticut. Adelma Grenier Simmons had purchased the farm in 1930 and had developed it into an Herb sanctuary open to the public for tours in the gardens, herb luncheons, and a shop with an assortment of herb products for sale. She had herbal wreaths, teas, pillows, oils and everything herbal. I fell in love with the place and she was my inspiration. I asked her if I could carry her products if I opened a shop in Westport, CT. To my surprise, she said yes. There was a hitch: She would only supply me to get me started. Miss Plum's Particulars carried her products for four years —what a gift. I also sold herb plants grown by Gilberties, which closed the loop. Caprilands Herb Farm is still open to the public April-December. Call 860-742-7244, but Adelma is no longer there; she died in 1997. There is a web site if you are interested.: [www.caprilands.com](http://www.caprilands.com).

Herbs are very special herbaceous plants. Generally deer don't eat them except for some fine herbs. Herbs can be perennials, biennials or annuals, and many are hardy to our area.

**They are classified as culinary, savory, medicinal, biblical, fragrant, and some are used as insect repellents:**

Culinary will include fine herbs such as chervil, dill, parsley, tarragon, etc.

Savory herbs: sage, thyme, marjoram, borage, rosemary, basil, bay leaves, and mints

Healing or medicinal herbs: chamomile, aspirin comes from willow bark; antiseptics-rosemary; astringents-eucalyptus, and aloe for burns.

Biblical herbs: Rue, Artemisia, Yarrow, Achillea

Fragrant herbs: Ambrosia, bergamot, geranium, lavender, mints, southernwood, verbena, woodruff and wormwood, These are dried or made up into perfumes or waters.

Insect repellents: A number of herbs are used to repel insects, for example, pennyroyal, eucalyptus, calendula, and lavender are natural insect repellents.

Herbs have helped people throughout history. Apothecary shops go back to 754 AD. Muslim pharmacists in the Islamic Golden Age were recorded by Geoffrey Chaucer (1342-1400) who mentions an English apothecary shop in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Conditions for growing most herbs are generally the same. They like well-drained, alkaline-to-neutral soil and sun. Thyme loves being in a rock garden or used as a border plant. When you walk by, crush a few leaves. It's highly aromatic, and the scent is intensified when the leaves are crushed. Some herbs - chervil, stevia, mints, for example - can tolerate moist soil. Stevia is a wonderful herb to plant in a container. Its leaves are strong, dark green and abundant. The leaves are used as a sugar substitute that is on our grocery store shelves today.

There is so much to say about herbs. I'll have more in part 2.