

Low-Maintenance Herbs

Ellen A. Vincent
Environmental
Landscape Specialist
Clemson University



An HERB plant:

- “Any plant that may be used for pleasure, fragrance, or physic:”--Herb Society of America (HSA)
- “A plant or plant part valued for medicinal or savory qualities”—Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1989
- Herbs may be annual, biennial, or perennial; herbaceous (non-woody stems) or woody (perennials, vines, shrubs, trees)

HERB plants

- May be herbaceous (non-woody stems) or woody
- Herbaceous herb examples: *Achillea* (yarrow), *Echinacea* (purple cone flower), *Foeniculum* (bronze fennel)

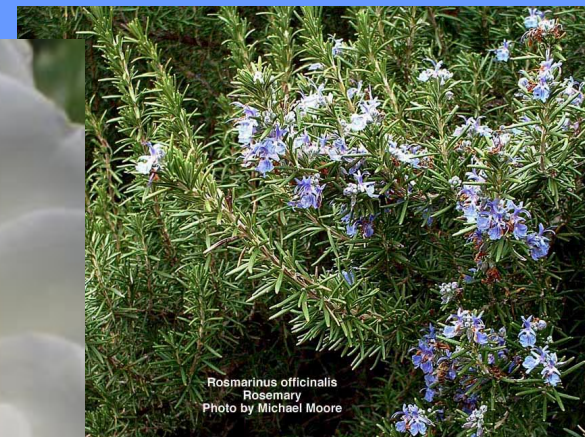
Herbaceous herb plants:



Woody herb plants:

- Maintain a persistent stem above ground during cold weather
- May or may not lose leaves in cold weather
- Examples: *Lavandula* (lavender), *Rosa* (rose), *Rosmarinus* (rosemary)

Woody herb plants:



Low-maintenance herbs

- Do not need staking under normal conditions
- Are winter cold hardy and summer heat tolerant
- Are resistant to recurring insect and disease infestations
- If perennial do not need to be divided for at least three years
- Possess attractive foliage during entire growing season
- Are not invasive by seeds or roots

Allium schoenoprasum



http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/plants/plant_finder/plant_pages/11317.shtml

- Chives
- Full sun
- 12" h x 24" w
- Aromatic cylindrical hollow green leaves
- Pink ball-shaped flower heads; edible
- 'Forescate' larger 24" h and deeper pink color to flowers
- Bulbous perennial; divide bulbs in fall
- Zones 3-9
- Europe, Asia, N. America native
- Leaves, flowers: edible



Asarum canadense

- Canadian wild ginger
- Part to full shade
- 6" h x 6" w
- Heart shaped leaves
- Brown bell shaped flowers hidden by foliage in spring
- Zones 2-8
- North American native
- Rhizome dried for historical medicinal; perfume



Athyrium nipponicum 'Pictum'

- Japanese painted fern
- Part shade
- 8-12" h x 15-18" w
- Lance shaped silver gray green leaves with maroon midribs
- 'Ursula's Red' bred in SC (origin Japan)
- Zones 5-8
- Historical-medicinal: liquid extract for tapeworm; roots as an ointment for wounds. Dangerous in strong dose.



Baptisia australis

- False indigo blue
- Sun to part shade
- 5' h x 2' w
- Fern like foliage
- Tiny deep blue blooms in early summer
- Deep blue to black seed pods
- Zones 3-9
- Eastern US native
- Dye plant; historical-medical (purgative, antiseptic)



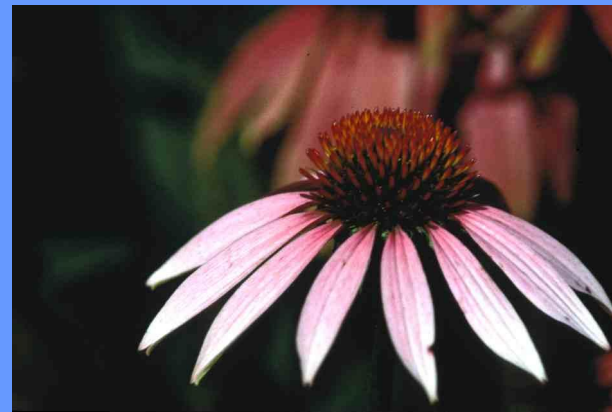
Cymbopogon citratus

- Lemongrass
- Sun
- 5' h x 3' w
- Loose panicles of bloom in late summer are rare
- Pale blue-green leaves up to 36" long, rough sharp margin
- Aromatic foliage
- Zones 8-10
- India; Sri Lanka native
- Used in Thai cooking; essential oil for perfumery



Echinacea purpurea

- Purple coneflower
- Sun
- 4' h x 18" w
- Rosy-purple flowers in midsummer to autumn
- Zones 3-9
- Eastern US native
- Root, fresh historical-medical; attracts bees and butterflies



Foeniculum vulgare 'Purpureum'

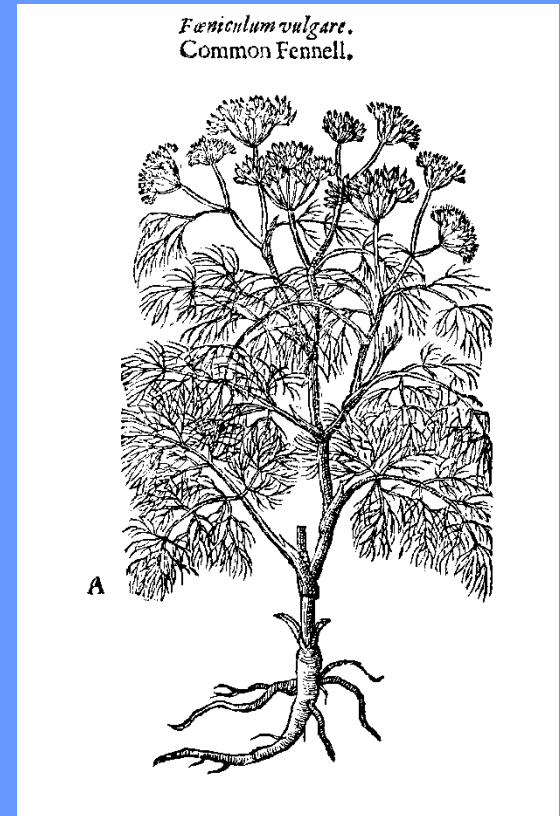
- Bronze fennel
- Sun
- 6' h x 18" w
- Bronze purple foliage is finely cut and feathery on tips
- Zones 4-9
- Southern Europe native
- Seeds, leaves, roots: historical medicinal



Foeniculum vulgare 'Purpureum'

'Above the lower plants it towers,
The Fennel with its yellow
flowers;
And in an earlier age than ours
Was gifted with the wondrous
powers
Lost vision to restore.'

-Longfellow in Grieve (1982)



Gerard's Herbal 1633

Gaura lindheimeri

- White gaura
- Sun
- 5' h x 3' w
- Pink buds open to white blooms late spring to early autumn
- Slender stems and leaves
- "Siskiyou Pink" cultivar
- Zones 5-9
- Southern US native
- Attracts bees & butterflies



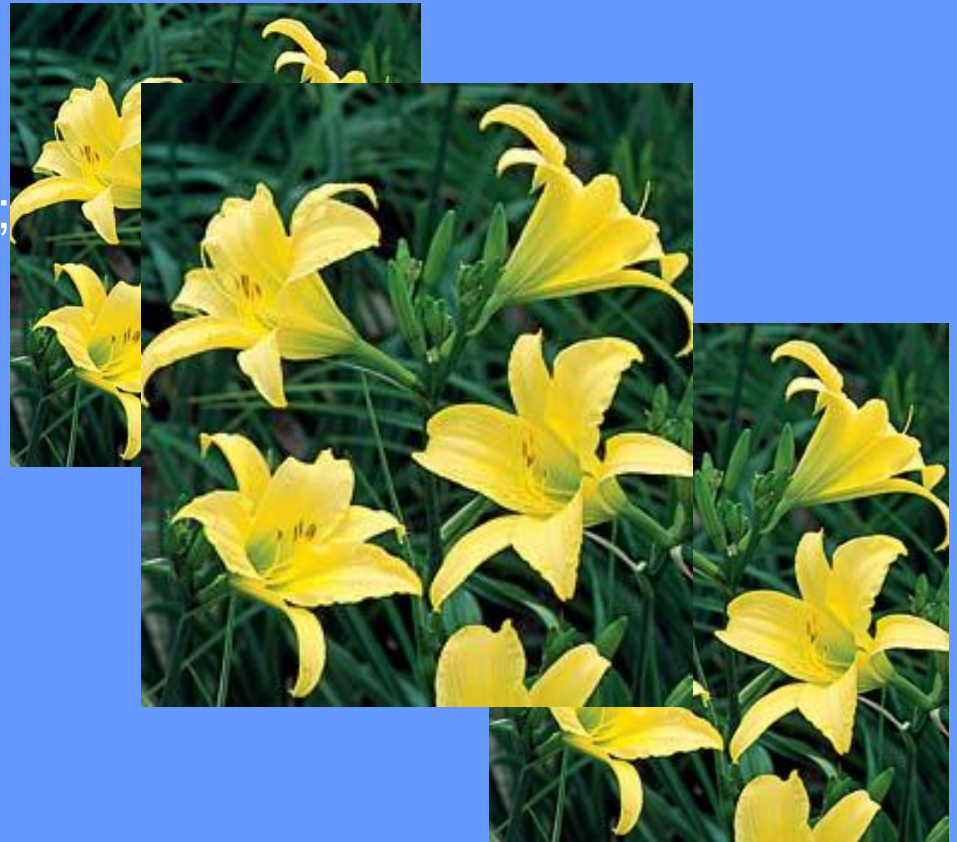
Helleborus orientalis

- Lenten rose
- Full to partial shade
- 18" h x 18" w
- Nodding saucer shaped white flowers often stained green and pale pink, in midwinter to midspring
- Basal leathery leaves evergreen
- Zones 4-9
- Native to Greece and Turkey
- Poison. Tincture of root used in homeopathy for diarrhea and indigestion



Hemerocallis hybrids

- Daylily
- Full sun
- 6-48" h x 12-36" w
- Wide color range of blooms; 'Hyperion' & 'Happy Returns' are yellow
- Basal leathery leaves evergreen
- Zones 3-10
- Native to China, Korea, Japan
- Flowers in tempura, salads



Laurus nobilis



- Bay tree
- Full sun to partial shade
- Protect from wind
- 40' h x 30' w
- Aromatic leaves (to 4" long)
- Pyramidal evergreen tree or large shrub
- Zones 8-10
- Mediterranean native
- Leaves, fruit, oil: topiary; cooking; wreaths used by ancients' for heroes and poets crowns



Lavandula stoechas

- French lavender
- Full sun
- 24" h x 24" w
- Spikes of fragrant deep purple blooms topped by purple bracts in late spring to summer
- Subspecies *pedunculata* Spanish lavender, bears flowers well above foliage
- Fragrant silver green foliage
- Zones 8-9
- Mediterranean native
- Flowers, leaves, oil: food; perfume-ancient and modern (linens, bath, bodies); antiseptic for wound during wars (France)
- Bees attracted



Lavandula stoechas

“It comforts the stomach.”

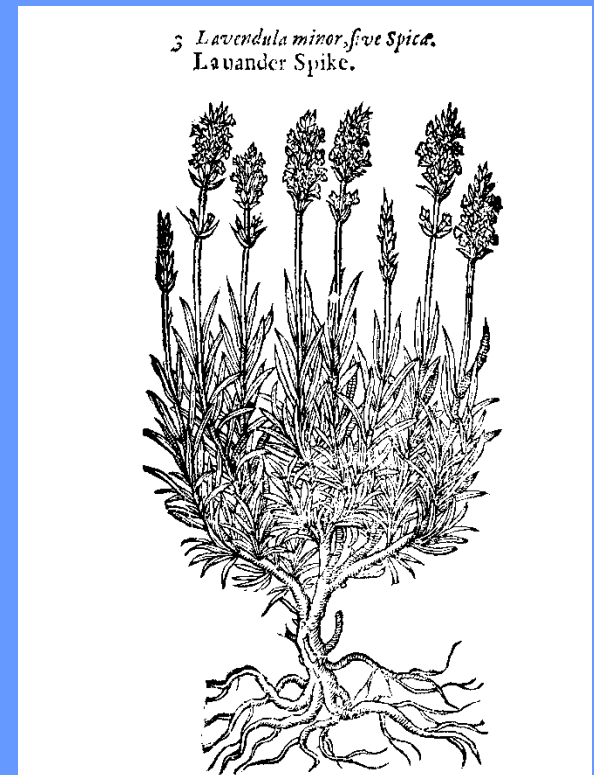
-Gerard

“It is used against the biting of serpents, mad dogs and other venomous creatures...”

-Salmon (1710)

A few drops of oil are sufficient
“...either for inward or outward griefs”

-Culpepper



Gerard's Herbal 1633

Lavandula x intermedia 'Provence'

- Lavandin
- Full sun
- 12" h x 24" w
- Spikes of fragrant dark violet blooms in summer
- Fragrant silver green foliage; bushy habit
- Zones 5-8
- Garden origin



Images: <http://www.highcountrygardens.com/catalog/product/63155/>

Liatris spicata 'Kobold'

- Spike gayfeather
- Full sun
- 24" h x 24" w
- Pinkish purple flower spikes in mid-late summer into autumn
- 'Kobold' does not need staking
- Zones 3-9
- E and S US native
- Root, in water as a diuretic. Additive to tobacco; repels moths



Muhlenbergia capillaris

- Pink muhly grass
- Full sun
- 4' h x 3' w
- Airy pink blooms in late summer
- Narrow grass leaves
- Zones 6-10
- Native to central and southeastern US
- Leaves: fresh in arrangements; woven in baskets



Origanum vulgare 'Aureum'



Image:

http://www.bowoodfarms.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/plants.plantDetail/plant_id/1318/index.htm

- Golden creeping oregano
- Full sun
- 6"-12" h x 12-18" w
- Pink flowers in mid-late summer
- Evergreen aromatic yellow-green colored leaves
- 'Aureum' spreads less than species
- Zones 5-9
- Native to Europe
- Oil in medicinal and leaves in culinary



<http://www.virtualplanttags.com/vpt.asp?co=410087&pID=47790&cID=&r=GIYP>

Petroselinum crispum; *P.* 'Italian Plain Leaf'; *var. Neopolitan*

- Parsley
- Full sun
- 8-12" h x 12" w
- Aromatic leaves: curly or flat; green color bright or dark
- Zones 3-9
- Native to Mediterranean Europe
- Biennial: Star-shaped greenish yellow blooms (32" h) second season
- Roots, seeds, leaves, stems: historically not eaten-used in sacred ceremonies to honor the dead; dye plant; culinary 8/2/2010



Rosmarinus officinalis

- Rosemary
- Full sun
- 4' h x 4' w
- Whorls of tiny blue blooms from midspring into summer and again in autumn
- Fragrant evergreen leaves on woody stems, often deer resistant
- 'Arp': is hardier zone 7-10; 'Irene' PP#9,124': prostrate 1.5' h x 3' w
- Zones 8-10
- Native to Mediterranean region
- Leaves, root, oil: historical-medicinal; culinary; perfume; good temperament; strengthens the memory; symbol of love and loyalty used in weddings, funerals, festivals



Rosmarinus officinalis

- There's rosemary, That's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember.

-Hamlet



Gerard's Herbal 1633

Rudbeckia fulgida var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'

- Black-eyed-Susan
- Full sun
- 36" h x 18" w
- Daisy-like yellow flowers with a mahogany disk from summer into autumn
- Fragrant evergreen leaves on woody stems
- Zones 4-9
- E. US native
- Attracts bees



Salvia elegans

- Pineapple sage
- Full sun
- 6' h x 3' w
- Red flowers from winter into spring
- Aromatic leaves
- Zones 8-10
- Mexico, Guatemala native
- Leaves flavor drinks and salads



Image: http://plants.usda.gov/java/largeImage?imageID=sael6_001_avp.jpg

Salvia officinalis 'Berggarten'



<http://www.frogmoregardens.com.au/genus/Salvia>

- Sage
- Full sun
- 24" h x w
- Purple flowers in summer; aromatic rounded gray-green leaves
- Compact evergreen perennial
- Zones 5-8
- Mediterranean, N. Africa native
- Leaves: Historical-medicinal; culinary



http://mothersearthgreenhouse.com/mothers_earth_greenhouse_036.htm

Salvia officinalis

“Sage helps the nerves and by its powerful might

Palsy is cured and fever put to flight.”

-old French saying

“Sage is singularly good for the head and brain, it quickeneth the senses and memory, strengthens the sinews, restoreth health to those who have the palsy...

-Gerard



Santolina rosmarinifolia (virens)

- Lavender cotton
- Full sun
- Up to 24" h x 24" w
- Yellow button-like blooms in mid to late summer
- Zones 6-9
- Native to Europe
- Perfume; historical: twigs used to repel moths in linens; historical-medicinal use for 'bites of venomous beasts' (Grieve, Culpepper)



Scabiosa columbaria 'Butterfly Blue' and 'Pink Mist'

- Scabious
- Full sun
- Up to 24" h x 30" w
- Pincushion like blooms appear during summer and winter
- Zones 5-8
- Native to Europe, W. Asia
- Used historical-medicinally for remedy of sores on skin (Grieve, Gerard, Culpepper)



Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks'

- Goldenrod
- Full sun
- 24-36" h x 24-36" w
- Yellow blooms in late summer and autumn
- Zones 4-8
- Native N. America, Europe
- Leaves, flowers: dye; historical-medicinal as aromatic, stimulant, astringent, diuretic



Herbs in the landscape

- May be used in specialty gardens; mixed borders; or containers.
- Tend to effect the senses (aroma, tactile, aesthetics, cultural associations).
- Often create “restorative” experiences for viewers.

Restoration *-Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989*

- Theory is a response to the belief that many people suffer from mental fatigue, decreased attention span, and irritability.
- Few people have a large supply of tranquility, serenity, or peace of mind.
- Natural settings are ideal restorative environments and may be experienced in actuality or through imagination.

Soft fascination -Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, 1998

- A source of interest that keeps people from being bored and uses involuntary (effortless) attention.
- Allows the fatigued mind to rest or restore.
- Examples include viewing or being in a garden; watching bees and butterflies on a flower; seeing plants swaying gently in the breeze; viewing sunsets and sunrises; etc.

Aromatherapy

- Aroma- “a usually pleasing odor” - *The New Merriam-Webster dictionary 1989*
- Therapeutics- “a branch of medical science dealing with the use of remedies” - *The New Merriam-Webster dictionary 1989*
- Therapy- “treatment of bodily or mental disorders” - *The New Merriam-Webster dictionary 1989*

Sissinghurst white garden



Fred McGourtey's perennial border, Conn.



Hidcote red border



Herb Garden, New York



Seabrook Island, SC



Low-Maintenance herbs in the landscape

- Require intensive planning, design, selection, and installation
- Reduce pesticide usage
- Reduce maintenance
- Require less irrigation once established

Low-maintenance herbs

- Are specific to place and environment
- Prefer well-drained, moderately fertile soil
- Require ample moisture during establishment
- Prefer a pH of 5.5-7.0
- Perennials may need to be divided every 3 years (in many cases)

Success in the landscape

- Full sun (six or more hours per day)
- Extremely well-drained soil
- Moderate, not high, soil fertility
- Frequent trimming/cutting back

Success in the landscape

- Well-drained fertile soil
- Proper sun exposure
- Proper planting techniques
- Proper placement and spacing
- Mulch
- Proper maintenance

Soil preparation

- Test soil and follow laboratory recommendations for organic matter and fertilizer
- Till soil 15-18" deep
- Increase drainage and fertility by tilling organic matter (rotted manure, leaf mold peat moss, etc.) into soil
- Drainage is essential. Raised beds or berms may promote drainage. Sandy soils are ideal
- Avoid walking or driving on bed soil to prevent compaction; especially wet soil

Soil tips

- Drainage is essential for healthy plants
- Moderate fertility is the goal for healthy plants
- Planting too deep can cause crown rot, an ancient perennial hazard
- All plants require moisture, especially during drought, for best display
- Water deeply, but only when the soil is dry or almost dry
- Vegetative mulch increases soil organic matter content as it decomposes
- Avoid compacting soil

Proper sun exposure

- Plants requiring full sun should receive 6 or more hours of unobstructed sunlight per day
- With inadequate sunlight, plants may:
 - Bloom less or not at all
 - Stretch toward the light
 - Appear leggy
 - Exhibit faded foliar color

Sun seeking plants



Proper sun exposure

- Plants requiring part shade should receive less than 5 hours of direct sunlight per day
- Prefer shade from afternoon sun
- Plants receiving too much sun may:
 - Exhibit foliar browning
 - Appear stunted
 - Show faded foliar color

Sun scorched perennials



Needs shade from sun

8/2/2010



Proper shaded sun exposure

Proper planting techniques

- Plant right plant in the right place.
- Fall planting is best for woody plants and perennials because it provides time for roots to become established before onset of summer heat and drought.
- Prepared beds foster root growth.
- Loosen roots before placing in planting hole.
- Crown of plant (root flare) should be level with the ground or slightly higher.

Planting techniques (cont.)

- Eliminate air pockets by firmly pressing soil around roots
- Water and mulch



Proper placement and spacing

- Mass planting is popular
- Space plants according to their mature widths and heights. Many perennials will be spaced 18" apart

Proper spacing



Avoid overcrowding

- Disease and insect problems
- Frequent division

Mulch

- Mulch should not touch the stem of the plant or cover the crown

Proper maintenance

- Mulch
- Fertilize
- Dead-head/grooming/harvesting
- Weeding
- Watering
- Division

Maintenance-vegetative mulch

- Maintain 3-5" of mulch to:
 - Reduce weed seed germination
 - Conserve soil moisture
 - Maintain uniform soil temperature
 - Increase soil organic matter content
 - Keep foliage clean

Maintenance-fertilizing

- Follow soil test recommendations
- Use slow release nitrogen fertilizers when possible
- Place granular fertilizer 2-4” away from crowns of perennials and tree trunks
- Water fertilizer in deeply
- Water slowly to avoid leaching/runoff
- Wash all fertilizer granules off plant
- Do not apply fertilizer near a water body

Slow release fertilizers



Maintenance- deadheading/grooming/harvesting

- Remove spent flowers and dead flower stalks throughout growing season.
 - Seed production reduces flowering
- In early winter cut back dead foliage.
- In spring trim woody perennials back to encourage compact habit and fresh stems.
- Harvest tips (1/3 of stem) of leaf foliage frequently to stimulate new growth.

Harvest -leaves

- Prior to flowering harvest herb leaves in the early day after the dew has dried.
- Place in small bundles or on screens in a shaded location that receives ample air circulation.
- Once chip dry, place in an airtight container.



Harvest -flowers

- Clip flowers before they reach prime bloom.
- Store singly between paper and apply weight.
- Hang small bundles in a shaded location that receives ample air circulation.
- Place in a container and pour silica gel (craft store product) around bloom for precise drying.



Maintenance-weeding

- Remove all weeds from flower beds as they:
 - Compete with desirable plants for water and nutrients
 - May harbor insect pests and disease organisms

Maintenance-watering

- Water should reach the entire root zone
- Water slow and deep
- Allow soil to dry slowly between waterings
- Drip or soaker hoses work well in flower beds and borders

Dangers of over-watering

- Consistently wet soil may lead to:
 - Crown-rot and root rot problems
 - Greater risk of soil compaction
 - Disregard for water quantity issues

Maintenance-division

- Most perennials need to be divided to maintain vigor
- Expect to divide most perennials at least every three years
- Typical symptoms of perennials needing division include:
 - Floppy foliage
 - Reduced flowering

Perennial needing to be divided



Divide perennial-sever outer roots

Use
sharp
tools



Find center



Divide in two (if center is healthy)

Discard center if it is bare



Smaller portions take longer to achieve normal size and flower production

Reset healthy roots and top



Firm soil, add mulch, and water



Societies & Associations

- Herb Society of America
 - www.herbsociety.org
- International Herb Society
 - www.iherb.org
- Herb Growing and Marketing Network
 - www.herbworld.com

References

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Contact information



- Ellen A. Vincent
- Environmental Landscape Specialist
- Horticulture Dept. Box 340319
- Clemson, SC 29634-0319
- 864.656.1342
- 803.243.8888 (cell)
- ellenav@clemson.edu