<dryingMethod>What You'll Need

Equipment / Tools

Pruners or garden scissors

Airtight containers

String or rubber bands

Materials

Paper bag

Container labels

Paper towels

Instructions

How to Dry Fresh Herbs

Gather your clippings.

Check in about two weeks to see how things are progressing. Keep checking weekly until your herbs are dry enough to crumble and ready to store.

Remove any dry or diseased leaves from the cut herbs. Yellowed leaves and leaves spotted by disease are not worth drying. Their flavor has already been diminished by the stress of the season.

Shake the branches gently to remove any insects. There are always hitchhikers, and since you won't be thoroughly washing the stems, get rid of as many as you can right now.

Make sure the herbs are dry. If you've picked your herbs while the plants are dry, you should be able to simply shake off any excess soil. Rinse with cool water only if necessary and pat dry with paper towels. Hang or lay the herb branches out where they will get plenty of air circulation so they can dry out quickly. Wet herbs will mold and rot.

Remove the lower leaves along the bottom inch or so of the stem. You can use these leaves fresh or dry them separately.

Bundle four to six stems together and tie as a bunch. You can either use a string or a rubber band. The bundles will shrink as they dry and the rubber band will loosen, so check periodically to make sure that the bundle is not slipping. If you are trying to dry herbs that have a high water content, make small bundles so they get air flow between the branches and do not rot.

Punch or cut holes in a paper bag, then label the bag with the name of the herb you are drying.

Place the herb bundle upside down into the bag. You can include the loose leaves you removed from the bottom inch of the stems if you like.

Secure the bag by gathering the end around the bundle and tie it closed. Make sure the herbs are not crowded inside the bag.

Hang the bag upside down in a warm, airy room.

How to Store Herbs

Once you've completed the drying process:

Store your dried herbs in airtight containers. Small canning jars work nicely. Zippered plastic bags will work, as well. Your herbs will retain more flavor if you store the leaves whole and crush them when you are ready to use them.

Label and date your containers.

Discard any dried herbs that show the slightest sign of mold. It will only spread.

Place containers in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. There are now amber-colored canning jars that are designed to block sunlight.</dryingMethod>