

## Tea Containers

What could be more satisfying and refreshing than growing your own herbs for tea? Just step out your back door, pluck a few leaves off your favorite herbs, and within minutes you can enjoy a fresh cup of tea! How self-sufficient!

We have compiled a list of herbs perfect for tea, and life in a container. Most of these plants require full sun and good drainage. There are some exceptions for light requirements. Group two or three plants with similar light requirements in a container for a nice combination. You can also mass a few pots of each herb together for a pleasing vignette.

## Making tea

For hot tea, pour boiling water over leaves and steep for a few minutes. Keep in mind to use only small amounts of your herbs for tea, large doses of some herbs may be harmful and extremely bitter. You can put your tea in the fridge for iced tea. Impress your friends by adding a mint leaf to each square of your ice cube tray. Fill the tray half way, add a leaf on top, and freeze.

## Herbs for tea

> **Apple mint-** *Mentha suaveolens*. Grows to 3' tall. Needs full sun. Tolerates dry conditions more than other mints. Use leaves for tea.

> **Aztec Sweet Herb-** *Lippia dulcis*. A trailing annual. Leaves add a sweet taste to tea.

> **Bergamot, Bee balm-** *Monarda didyma*. Grows 3-5' tall and wide. Red flowers in July/August. A prime ingredient in Earl Grey tea. Use the leaves for tea.

> **Bee Balm-** *Monarda citriodora*. Grows 3-5' tall and wide. Partial shade. Pink flowers also attract butterflies, bees and humming birds. Leaves add a lemony aroma to tea.

> **Catnip-** *Nepeta cataria*. Grows 3' tall and wide in full sun. You and your cat can enjoy the soothing qualities of catnip. Steep leaves in water while kitty rolls euphorically at your feet. Place a basket over the plant if the cat loves it too much.

> **Chamomile-** Roman (*Chamaemelum nobile*) is a mat forming plant. German (*Matricaria recutita*) is a 2'+ tall annual that is easy to seed. Use flowers for a relaxing tea.

> **Lavender-** *Lavendula sp.* Evergreen shrubs in many sizes. Lavender thrives in full hot sun. 'Compacta', 'Hidcote', 'Jean Davis', and 'Munstead' are good dwarf varieties perfect for container culture. Use stems and flowers for a strong aromatic tea.

> **Lemon Balm-** *Melissa officinalis*. A vigorous perennial 2-3' tall. Prefers full sun. Pinch flowers to encourage leaves and discourage seed. Use leaves for a relaxing lemon tea.

> **Lemon grass-** *Cymbopogon citratus*. A tender perennial or annual grass. Prefers full sun. Keep sheltered in colder parts of the

season, or treat as an annual. Leaves and stems offer a lemon taste to tea.

> **Lemon Verbena-** *Aloysia triphylla*. A bushy tender perennial growing 2-10' tall. Wispy lavender flowers in summer. Harvest leaves for a wonderful lemon tea, or lemony cookies.

> **Orange Bergamot-** *Mentha x piperita* 'Orange'. Grows 1-3' tall in full sun or partial shade. The leaves add a strong citrus flavor to tea.

> **Peppermint-** *Mentha x piperita*. Grows up to 3' tall. Full sun to light shade. Steep leaves for a classic mint tea. It is said to soothe an upset tummy.

> **Pineapple Sage-** *Salvia elegans*. A tender perennial reaching 2-3' tall. Bright red flowers in late summer attract humming birds. Steep leaves for a fruity tea.

> **Rosemary-** *Rosmarinus*. Size of plant depends on variety. Trailing varieties will cascade over the pots. Thrives in full sun. Leaves offer a strong aromatic tea.

> **Scented Geranium-** *Pelargonium graveolens*. Tender perennial, or annual. A wide range of varieties with many flavors to add to tea. For example, peppermint, apple, nutmeg, lemon, coconut and rose.

> **Spearmint-** *Mentha spicata*. Grows 3' tall in full sun or part shade. Use leaves in tea.

> **Stevia-** *Stevia rebaudiana*. A tender perennial or annual. Leaves add a sweet taste to tea or your favorite cookies. Stevia is said to be ten times sweeter than sugar!

> **Tea-** *Camellia sinensis*. An evergreen shrub growing 3-6' tall and wide. Small white or pink flowers in November. Prefers partial shade. Pick new leaves to brew your own cup of green tea.

> **White Horehound-** *Marriubium vulgare*. Grows to 2' in full sun. Seeped leaves make a strong tea that is said to relieve colds and soar throats

> **Wintergreen-** *Gaultheria procumbens*. An evergreen ground cover preferring partial shade. Red berries in winter. Pick and crush leaves for a nice wintergreen flavored tea.

### Recommended Combinations

Full hot sun: Lavender, Pineapple sage, Scented geraniums, Aztec sweet herb, Lemon grass and rosemary.

Partial Shade: Tea, Peppermint, Spearmint, Bee balm, and wintergreen.

Annual teapots: Lemon grass, Scented geranium, stevia, German chamomile, and Aztec sweet herb.

### Tips for teapots

**When to plant** These containers can be planted at any time the plants are available. If they are planted early in the season, they will have more time to become full.

**Water** In hot sun you will need to water every day or so. If you wish to use less water, mix soil moist granuals with the potting soil. Do not use soil moist granuals with mediterrean herbs such as lavender or rosemary. In addition, water needs change with the weather.

**Fertilizer** You can mix a time release fertilizer (such as Osmocote), or a granular organic all-purpose fertilizer, with the potting soil. Another method is to fertilize once a month in the growing season with an all-purpose liquid fertilizer (such as Aunt Ellie's Fish and Kelp).

**Cleaning** Pinch the flowers of herbs that you wish to encourage leaf development.

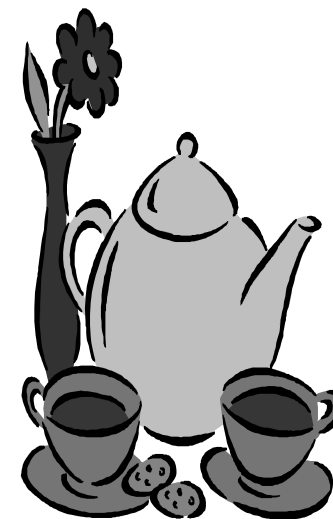
**Pruning** Shrubby herbs such as lavender, rosemary and tea are pruned in late winter to early spring. This pruning helps keep the plants compact. Deciduous herbs such as peppermint or bee balm can be cut back to a few inches above the soil in winter.

**Shelter** Tender perennials need additional shelter to make it through the winter. Pull containers into a sheltered area such as a porch or garage to ensure plant survival for the next season.

### Tea containers

Ideas for herb containers for making tea

# Tea Pots



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