

## Herbal Gardening and Plant Conservation

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I feel that we, as humans, have a responsibility to the plant and animal kingdoms since we utilize so much of their bounty. Overharvesting has caused many issues in the wonderful ecosystems that make up our rich and diverse planet. Even sustainable harvesting with good intentions can pose a problem if the plant communities dwindle and are unable to rebound to sufficiently abundant stands. I love to wild craft herbs, lichens and mushrooms out of the forest where I live in northern California but I monitor the areas where I harvest closely to make sure that they stay healthy. I also grow much of what I harvest out of the forest in my gardens so I don't only rely on the plants in the wild. Since I grew up in the northeast and love the plants there I also have an area in my garden devoted to medicinal plants from that part of the country.

When given the appropriate conditions in a garden setting, wild plants can thrive and provide their food and medicine plus harvest can happen without impacting the plants native ecosystems. Growing wild plants that are used on a regular basis is not only fun and rewarding but also respectful to the other species that depend on their green allies to be able to survive. Creating wild plant areas in gardens gives you a reliable source of your favorite botanicals and helps offset the harvest of them in their native environments as well as providing habitat for the wildlife that may live in your area.

- Choose what you want to grow
  - ~ perennials/annuals
  - ~ medicinal/edible/landscape
  - ~ personal affinities toward plants
    - colors, smells, shapes, tastes
  - ~ adapt herbs to what you need/want
    - water garden
    - drought tolerant
    - sun/shade areas
    - attract pollinators
    - dyer's garden
    - hedges
    - walls, paths, ground cover
    - threatened/endangered plants
  
- How to arrange gardens
  - ~ sun/shade
  - ~ soil requirements
  - ~ height of plants

- ~ spacing
- ~ proximity to water
- ~ plant communities

- The organic herb garden
  - ~ companion planting
  - ~ herbal pesticides
  - ~ herbal fertilizers
  - ~ herbs on compost heap
- Harvesting garden herbs
  - ~ when to harvest
  - ~ which parts of the plants
  - ~ plants for immediate use
  - ~ drying and storing plants
  - ~ processing plants in different mediums
- Creating remedies with the garden harvest
  - ~ fresh
  - ~ dried
  - ~ internal
  - ~ external
- Keeping plant conservation in mind
  - ~ identify herbs that are at risk
  - ~ study their habitat to see what they may need
  - ~ do your best to provide the components they need to grow
  - ~ allow time for them to establish plant communities that can sustain harvest
  - ~ tend wild stands of plants to ensure their health

Plants are essential to life on earth! Tread lightly, listen thoroughly and have the utmost respect while enjoying the outdoors, harvesting the vibrant medicine and carving a space for the wild ones in your gardens.