

Today there's an abundance of information in bookstores and libraries on herbs. Some of the popular areas of exploration in herbs are: herb baths, herb vinegars and oils, facial preparations, potpourris, and herbs in cooking. You might want to obtain a couple books on some of these subjects, and have fun exploring the uses of herbs! Here are a few ideas:

HERBAL BATHS

The two easiest ways to add herbs to a bath are: hang 3 or 4 herb tea bags under the tap; or place a tea ball in the water. Or you can simply place a handful of herbs into a square of cheesecloth, pull the ends of the corners up, and tie to hold the herbs inside.

Soothing bath herbs

Catnip, comfrey, chamomile, hyssop, lemon balm, rose flowers, tansy flowers, valerian roots, violets.

Herbs for aching muscles and joints: (The gardener's special!)

bay, juniper berries, mugwort, oregano, sage, strawberry leaves.

Stimulating bath herbs:

Basil, bay, calendula flowers, fennel, horseradish roots, lavender flowers, lemon verbena, loveage roots, marjoram, mint, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme.

HERB VINEGARS

It is so easy to enjoy flavored vinegars from your own kitchen. Here are the basics for vinegar preparation: Sterilize all bottles and lids, including corks. Note: If you are using metal rings, insert plastic wrap between the ring and the bottle. Vinegar must not come in contact with metal. Place 7-12 sprigs of herbs into bottles. Try to bruise the leaves slightly. Add other ingredients as desired. Pour in vinegar. Choose either a mild vinegar, like white wine, or a stronger one, like balsamic, white organic, white distilled, apple cider, malt, or red wine vinegar. Cover and let stand in cool, dark place for 4-6 weeks. Shake the bottles every few days. Strain the vinegar 4-5 times through a coffee filter until it is clear. Pour into a new sterilized bottle and add fresh herbs. Store at room temp. for up to 3 months.

Bouquet Garni Vinegar

1 cup parsley, chopped fine
½ cup thyme
½ cup bay leaf
½ cup rosemary
3 cups balsamic vinegar

Tuscan Vinegar

2 sprigs fresh rosemary
2 sprigs fresh oregano
1 sprig fresh sage
2 sprigs fresh basil
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 Tbsp. black pepper
1 cup white organic vinegar

Provençal Vinegar

1 sprig fresh rosemary
2 bay leaves
1 sprig fresh thyme
1 sprig fresh savory
1 sprig fresh lavender
1 sprig fresh marjoram
4 garlic cloves
1 hot red pepper
2 cups white wine vinegar

HERB FLAVORED OILS

Make herbal oils in smaller amounts, since oils don't have the same purification qualities as vinegars. Place herbs in sterilized bottles with non-metal caps and add oil. Keep in cool, dark place for two weeks, strain, and re-bottle. Refrigerate and then warm to room temperature before using.

Herbs de Provence Oil

2 sprigs fresh rosemary
1 sprig fresh thyme
2 garlic cloves
2 sprigs fresh oregano

Sage Oil

½ cup fresh sage leaves
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Basil Oil

1 cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves
1 cup best quality olive oil

Blanch basil leaves for 2 min. Squeeze to dry. Place leaves and ½ of the oil in a blender. Blend until smooth. Gradually add remaining oil. Pour into glass jar, cover and steep for at least a day at room temp. Refrigerate.