



MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Year Round Gardening

Cocktail Gardening

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When one thinks of using herbs, it is usually for medicinal or culinary purposes. However, whether you have a large garden area or just a few planter boxes and a hodge-podge of pots, you can also enjoy the bounty of your gardening efforts in refreshing, flavorsome summertime beverages.

Basil – Part of the Mint family, this is a tender annual that thrives in moist, well-drained, medium-textured soil, full sun and wind protection. Currently a fashionable herb in the cocktail scene it adds great flavor to gin, tequila or rum drinks. Muddle, use as a garnish or in simple syrup.



Photo courtesy of Debra Othitis

Cilantro – A short-lived annual herb, cilantro leaves look similar to flat-leaved parsley. It requires full sun, light and moderately rich soil kept moist but not constantly wet. Cooler weather encourages more leafy growth for a longer period of time. Warmer weather makes the plant “bolt” bringing flowers and then seeds. People either love cilantro or hate it. If you are the former, make a simple syrup of chopped cilantro and lime juice, mix with vodka, tequila or gin, sparkling water and a lime wedge.

Lavender - Lavender is a semi-woody perennial sub-shrub that prefers full sun and an alkaline soil with very little organic matter. Water deeply, but ensure good drainage and plenty of sunlight. Harvest as blossoms begin to open. Lavender is perhaps best prepared in a simple syrup. It is the taste of springtime in front porch drinks featuring vodka, gin or lemonade.

Lovage – This large, vigorous hardy perennial grows 4-6 feet tall in deep, moist, rich soils and full sun or light shade. Leaves and flavor resemble celery. The stems are hollow and make great, flavorful straws in your Bloody Mary.

Mint - Herbaceous perennials, mints grow well in full sun to partial shade with well-draining, moist soils. Varieties include chocolate, lemon, ginger, spearmint, and apple. Mint is probably the most commonly used fresh herb for cocktails. Think mojitos and juleps. Muddled or used as a garnish or infusion, mint is a winning choice for the gardener's cocktail, lemonade or iced tea.

Rosemary – Another member of the Mint family, rosemary is a shrubby, tender perennial best grown as an annual in Colorado. It requires full sun with moist, well-draining soil. The rich, woody flavor of rosemary can be added whole or muddled in gin or vodka or to add pronounced depth to bourbon. Try adding a sprig to your next gin and tonic or whiskey sour.

Sage - Sage is a perennial in the Mint family requiring full sun and moist, well-draining soil. Earthy, woody and vaguely peppery, sage has a wonderful, distinctive flavor, but should be used sparingly. Muddled and infused into spirits or prepared in a simple syrup, sage adds savory complexity to mixed drinks. Add some to your next gin fizz for a summer drink with unmistakable garden taste.

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research based answers. The Master Gardener Help Desk, located at 17 N Spruce Street, is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 AM - Noon and 1:00PM - 4:00PM. Call 520-7684 or email CSUmg2@elpasoco.com.