

# Select and Prepare Herbs for Exhibit



Herbs are grown for three main uses: culinary (cooking), craft, and medicinal. Culinary herbs are generally used for seasoning and garnish. Herbs used for crafts are usually grown for their aromatic qualities and used to make potpourri.

Because there can be adverse health effects, the Oregon 4-H Herb Project does not address nor encourage growing herbs for medicinal use.

Herb plants may be grown for their leaves, stems, roots, or seeds. For a 4-H exhibit, often the part of the plant you display depends on its intended use. In general, how you display an herb depends on the part of the herb plant **most commonly** used.

## General Guidelines

4-H members are encouraged to research and choose any culinary or craft herb(s) they would like to grow. 4-H members must grow the herbs themselves. You can exhibit your herbs in three ways:

1. Fresh-cut
2. Dried
3. Potted

Each exhibit must include an **exhibit tag** and an **explanation card**. Please refer to the fair book for specific fair classes. Plan ahead, and plant herbs so they will be at their peak at exhibit time.

## Fresh-cut herbs

### Leaves

Fresh-cut herbs are grown for their leaves. Exhibit them with their stems in a container of water. Remove leaves below the water line so they do not rot. Leaves should be fresh and have no blemishes, bruises, or insect and disease damage.

If necessary, rinse very gently in cool water. When more than one stem is required, trim stems evenly, and select for uniform size.

After herbs flower, the essential oils change, affecting the flavor or scent. So, many herbs are best harvested and exhibited before they flower. To prevent early blossoming, keep the plant pruned.

### Flowers

Some herbs are grown for their flowers. The blossoms should be fresh, of uniform color and development, have no soil on them, and have no

**An herb is (1) a plant that has a fleshy stem as distinguished from the woody tissue of shrubs and trees, and that generally dies back at the end of each growing season; (2) any of various often aromatic plants used especially in medicine or as seasoning.**

**—New College Edition of the American Heritage Dictionary**

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insect or disease damage. Exhibit fresh-cut flowering herbs as you would other cut flowers. (See 4-H 231, the *Oregon 4-H Flower and Ornamental Grower's Handbook*, for how to exhibit fresh-cut flowers.)

Remove leaves below the water line so they do not rot.

### **Seeds**

Harvest herbs grown for their seeds when they have a mature, full head of seed that is still slightly greenish-brown (so the seeds do not fall off). Avoid over-mature, shattered seed heads. Tie the stems loosely together, and exhibit them on a paper plate, not in water.

### **Roots**

Roots are usually harvested in the fall, winter, or early spring. Clean them soon after harvest by shaking off as much soil as possible, then washing them under running water.

Exhibit roots on a paper plate, not in water.

### **Dried herbs**

Harvest herbs for drying when they contain the maximum amount of essential oils, which provide the flavor and scent. For leafy herbs, this is usually when the flower bud just begins to open. Harvest herb flowers just as they reach full flower. Harvest seed heads when they change from green to brown but before they drop.

Rinse gently if needed, and pick off dead or discolored leaves.

You can dry herbs on the stem. Gently remove the leaves and/or flowers after drying. Or, if you use a screen, you can remove the leaves and flowers before drying.

### **Potted herbs**

Refer to the fair book for specific requirements for exhibiting potted herbs.

## Judging

### Fresh-cut herbs

Color.....	20%
Condition (free from dirt, disease, blemish, insect damage).....	25%
Foliage and stem.....	15%
Typical of type.....	20%
Explanation card	
Common name.....	5%
Scientific name .....	5%
Care of plant explained .....	5%
Herbs' use explained .....	5%
	<hr/>
	100%

### Dried herbs

Color.....	20%
Condition (free from dirt, disease, blemish, insect damage .....	25%
Foliage, stem, seed (dried material correct for type) .....	15%
Drying complete/consistent (texture like corn flakes).....	20%
Explanation card	
Common name.....	5%
Scientific name .....	5%
Care of plant explained .....	5%
Herbs' use explained .....	5%
	<hr/>
	100%

### Potted herbs (container garden)

Explanation card	
Common names .....	5%
Scientific names .....	5%
Care of plants explained .....	5%
Herbs' use(s) explained .....	5%
Compatibility of container and plants.....	25%
Soil components (loose and crumbly, water reservoir space) .....	10%
Evidence of cultural care (no fertilizer salts on surface, foil, or rim of container).....	15%
Plant condition (free from blemishes, disease, or insect problems; healthy) .....	15%
Plant quality (form, substance, foliage, flowers)....	15%
	<hr/>
	100%

## How to exhibit specific herbs for most common use

Herbs grown for seeds	Fresh exhibit	Dried exhibit	Desirable characteristics
Anise Dill Coriander Caraway	5 seed heads on stems. Stems tied together at base of seed head and again 1 inch from bottom of stem	1 tbsp. dried seeds in recloseable plastic bag	Fully developed seed heads; no immature stems with no seed heads or over-mature, shattering seed heads
Herbs grown for leaves	Fresh exhibit	Dried exhibit	Desirable characteristics
Basil Bee balm/Bergamot Catnip/Catmint Chervil Chives Cilantro Comfrey Fennel Garden sorrel Lemon balm Lemon verbena Lovage Marjoram Marshmallow Mint Oregano Parsley Rosemary Sage Savory Scented geraniums Stevia Sweet cicely Sweet woodruff Tarragon Thyme	Harvest herbs chosen for exhibit before flowers bloom, with these exceptions: bee balm/bergamot, chives, lemon verbena, marshmallow, mint, and sage.  Exhibit well-developed but not over-mature leaves on stems 6–10" long.  Exhibit should be tied together and measure 1" in circumference.	Exhibit 3 tbsp. of dried leaves only—no stems. Try to exhibit whole leaves—do not purposely crush or powder them.  Undesirable characteristics include: yellow, brown, grey, or other unnatural colors; insect or disease damage.	Clean (not dirty); no insect or disease damage; natural, healthy color; no browning; no blooms; uniform in size and development
Herbs grown for roots	Fresh exhibit	Dried exhibit	Desirable characteristics
Horseradish Ginger	3 roots, uniform in size (2–4")	Exhibit 2 tbsp. of dried pieces or ground powder.	Clean (not dirty), uniform in size and development, no disease or insect damage
Herbs grown for flowers	Fresh exhibit	Dried exhibit	Desirable characteristics
Bee balm/Bergamot Borage Calendula Chamomile Lavender Nasturtium Rose Viola (sweet violet, Johnny-jump-up, pansy)	Exhibit 3 stems that are 6–10" long with well-developed leaves and mature flowers.	Exhibit 3 flower heads or 3 tbsp. of petals or ground powder.	No insect or disease damage to leaves, stems, or flowers. Uniform in size and development. Flowers are in the maturing stage, not past their prime.

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