

A tea garden—which has roots in ancient herbalist traditions—can be a modest plot or a windowsill container dedicated to growing herbs and flowers for steeping. These small gardens yield ingredients more potent than store-bought equivalents and can offer a nature connection and a soothing balm for anxieties.

Growing and Harvesting Tips

It's not practical to grow black or green tea in the Midwest, but with good growing conditions, many tea plants will thrive in our climate.

- **Optimal sun.** Most tea plants yield more and stay healthier in full sun. Ensure plants have 6+ hours of direct sunlight each day.
- **Well-drained soil.** Most herbs do not like wet feet so ensure the soil is well drained. Pots must have holes in the bottom and beds must have loamy soil. Water plants if the soil feels dry 1 inch from the surface.
- **Harvest frequently.** The more you cut, the more they grow. Before plants flower, use sharp scissors to cut down to a leaf node, harvesting approximately 5% of the plant's total volume. Morning harvests, after dew has evaporated, will provide the highest flavor and nutrients.
- **Drying.** If leaves or flowers do not immediately go into the teapot, gather them into a small bundle and hang them upside down in a dark, cool, well-ventilated space. Flowerheads, like chamomile, can be spread on trays in a single layer.

Tasty Blends

Follow these steeping tips and use these recipes to jumpstart experimentation and find your favorite blends.

- Use 1-2 tablespoons of each fresh herb.
- Steep for 5-20 minutes in water that has reached a rolling boil.
- Cover the container to minimize the loss of volatile oils and heat.
- For a chilling summertime drink, add ice after steeping.

Relaxing and Winding Down

- Chamomile
- Lavender
- Lemon balm (for a stronger flavor)

Calming and Focusing

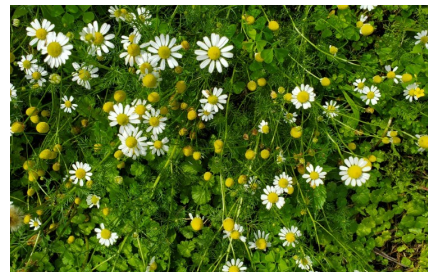
- Peppermint, spearmint or any other mint
- Stinging nettle for increased nutrition and complexity of flavor

Nutrient-Rich Vitamins and Minerals

- Nettles
- Red raspberry leaf
- Dandelion
- Rose hips
- Red clover

Immune System Boost

- Purple coneflower
- Rose hips
- Dandelion
- Elderberries or elderberry flowers



Chamomile can calm agitated nerves.



Anise hyssop has a tasty licorice flavor.



The leaves, flower and root of the prolific and shiny **dandelion** are highly nutritious.



All parts of **purple coneflower** are rich in nutrients that boost the immune system.



Stinging nettles are full of nutrients.

Top Herbs

These plants grow well in the Midwest and make tasty tea.

Common Name	Genus / Species	Height	Width	Light	Water	Parts Used	Flowering Time						
							Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Basil, Culinary	Ocimum basilicum	1-3'	6"	Full Sun	Mesic	Leaves							
Bee Balm	Monarda fistulosa	3-4'	2-6'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Flowers and leaves							
Broadleaf Sage	Salvia officinalis	18-30"	30-36"	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	Leaves							
Calendula	Calendula officinalis	1-2'	6"	Full Sun	Mesic	Flowers and leaves							
Chamomile, German	Matricaria chamomilla	1-2'	6"	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	Flowers							
Chamomile, Roman	Chamaemelum nobile	3-6"	Indef.	Full Sun	Mesic	Flowers							
Chicory	Cichorium intybus	1-4'	1-2'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic	Root							
Clover, Dutch White	Trifolium repens	4-10"	6-36"	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Flowers							
Clover, Red	Trifolium pratense	6-16"	6-16"	Full Sun	Mesic	Flowers							
Elderberry Shrub	Sambucus canadensis	5-12'	5-12'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Flowers and berries							
Fern, Sweet	Comptonia peregrina	3'	4-8'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Leaves							
Goldenrod, Showy	Solidago speciosa	3-5'	1-3'	Full Sun - Full Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Flowers							
Goldenrod, Stiff	Solidago rigida	1-3'	1-3'	Full Sun - Full Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Flowers							
Goldenrod, Zig Zag	Solidago flexicaulis		1-3'	Full Sun - Full Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Flowers							
Hyssop, Anise	Agastache foeniculum	2-4'	1-2'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Flowers and leaves							
Lavender	Lavandula angustifolia	18"	18"	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	Flowers and leaves							
Lemon Balm	Melissa officinalis	1-2'	8-12"	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic	Leaves							
Mint, Apple	Mentha suaveolens	12-18"	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Hydric	Leaves							
Mint, Chocolate	Mentha x piperita piperita	12-18"	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Leaves							
Mint, Spearmint	Mentha spicata	8-24"	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Leaves							
Purple Coneflower	Echinacea purpurea	3-4'	18"	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Flower, leaves and root							
Raspberry	Rubus idaeus	4-6'	Indef.	Full Sun	Mesic	Leaves							
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis	1-2'	1'	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	Leaves							
Rugosa Rose Shrub	Rosa rugosa	4-6'	4-8'	Full Sun	Xeric - Mesic	Hips and leaves							
Self-Heal	Prunella vulgaris	6-12"	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic - Hydric	Flowers and leaves							
Stinging Nettle	Urtica dioica	1-2'	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Hydric	Leaves							
Sweet Cicely	Myrrhis odorata	3-6'	2-5'	Full Sun - Part Shade	Mesic	Leaves							
Thyme, Creeping	Thymus	4"	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric - Mesic	Leaves							
Yarrow	Achillea millefolium	2-3'	Indef.	Full Sun - Part Shade	Xeric	Flowers							

