

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.



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.

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

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

