Perennial Herbs
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Although many favorite culinary herbs are quick-growing annuals, there are also many perennial types, which can fill an herb garden with great scents and taste for years to come. Here are a few to consider.

Common Perennials

Chives, Allium schoenoprasm, is a member of the onion family that grows easily from seed. There will be some variability in leaf thickness and flower head size among seedlings, but this is usually acceptable. If extremely uniform plants are needed, individual clumps of the plants can be separated into individual plants, which will form identical clumps of their own.

Chives is normally harvested by snipping off leaves at their base, then chopping them into or onto whatever dish is being prepared. Snipping hand-held small bunches with kitchen scissors works quite well. The flavor is similar to onion, but more subtle. The flower heads are very popular edible flower garnishes on dishes which have the leaves chopped as an ingredient. If flowers are to be eaten with the dish, individual florets need to be snipped from the inflorescence. Chives is a pretty dependable perennial that only needs division every 2-4 years to keep growth vigorous.

Garlic Chives, Allium tuberosum, is another member of the onion family that has flat leaves like leek and garlic. The flavor is very much like garlic and the tops are harvested like regular chives. Garlic chives has white flowers and grows taller than chives. It can become weedy if allowed to mature seed in the garden.

French Tarragon, Artemisia dracunculus sativa, is the queen of all herbs, and is most famous in French cuisine, but in fact is used throughout the world for its licorice-like flavor with the mild bite. It is often used to negate the "fishy" character of seafood dishes.

French tarragon does not form viable seeds, in fact, it rarely blooms under Midwest conditions. Seeds of "tarragon" will always be a disappointment as they will produce rank, mostly tasteless plants of Russian tarragon. Plants can be divided or stem tip cuttings rooted to form new plants. The plant forms numerous rhizomes in the fall, which can be separated and used to create an abundance of new plants the next spring. There are also specialists who make these divisions and sell the small plants, which quickly mature into usable size in the garden.

Repeated harvest of this herb over the season keeps the plants branching out, producing new tender shoots. Fresh tarragon is very much preferable to dried, since much of the character is lost in the drying process. Some sources describe dried tarragon as "little better than hay". For this reason, the plants make a dependable supply of fresh product throughout the season. It is normal in the fall for the plants to go into a dormancy. Potted plants on balconies may actually appear to die. Many of them get thrown out, when they are only resting.

While tarragon is sometimes listed as winter tender, it should withstand -30 degrees Fahrenheit if the crowns are given excellent drainage. What causes winterkill most often is soggy conditions. Once established in the ground, tarragon will produce very well, asking only to be divided regularly to avoid overcrowding.

Garlic, Allium sativum sativum and Allium sativum ophioscorodon, is another member of the onion family that is commonly sold as a vegetable, though its usage is like that of an herb. Its health benefits are becoming so well known, that it might as well be considered here as an herb. While garlic is a perennial, it needs annual division and replanting to produce the bulbs that are common on the market. Several types are available, both with and without topsets. Elephant garlic is not really a garlic at all, but a type of leek that forms a pungent bulb which tastes and resembles the garlic bulb.

For bulb culture, dry bulbs are normally divided into cloves and planted about 6-8 weeks before the ground freezes in the fall, somewhere around the first two weeks of October in the northern half of the
state. Plants will root in and begin to sprout before cold weather. In the first thaw of spring, the plants will be off and growing luxuriantly. Bulbing occurs in June, and bulbs can be dug when the tops start to yellow. In the Midwest, tops cannot usually be allowed to completely dry in the field, due to unpredictable moisture in the soil, which may begin to rot the delicate papery wrappers on the bulbs. Bulbs can be braided or bunched and hung in a dry, dark, airy place to complete drying. They then usually keep for months.

An interesting recent development is the culture of garlic in the form of scallions. Topsets or small cloves are planted fairly thickly in a row and the green plants dug, cleaned, and bunched like green onions. The whole plant, tops and all, is then chopped into dishes for flavor.

Mint, *Mentha spp.*, is an herb which comes in a wide variety of flavors. While most mints can be started from seed, the best and truest flavors come from vegetatively propagated plants. Care should be taken to get propagating material from sources clean of *Verticillium*, the number one disease pest of mints. Mint is an invasive plant which should be planted in enclosed areas, or where its spread can be controlled. Peppermint, spearmint, orange mint, apple mint, and a host of other types are available. All are popular in teas and for flavoring. Plants produce spreading lateral stems which are very aggressive propagation mechanisms.

Mint is used in cuisines around the world, with each one having a local variety of choice. Mint is a universal sign of welcome, and a cup of steaming mint tea is often served to visitors. In the American southeast, people living in isolated cabins would plant mint next to the front door. Then, when company was seen coming, from across the “holler”, youngsters were sent to brush the mint with a broom to release the fragrance and cover any unpleasant smells on the air.

Oregano, *Origanum spp.*, is a strong-flavored herb in the mint family. Common *Origanum vulgare* seeds produce plants that are almost useless in the kitchen. They form rank, rather tasteless plants which produce purplish pink flower heads which are attractive in dried arrangements and in the garden, but are culinary disasters.

True Greek Oregano seeds can be obtained, but care must be exercised because the common variety is sometimes sold as "Greek". Even given the right strain, there is variability between plants sufficient to make it necessary to propagate the most desirable plants by stem tip cuttings, which root rather easily. A good oregano will “bite back” when a leaf is chewed, having a very pungent flavor. Unfortunately, the poor quality common oregano is more dependably hardy than the really tasty one.

As with other herbs, cutting to slow or reduce flowering keeps production moving through the season. Oregano dries easily when cut and hung as described for other herbs. Some cultivars, such as ‘Kent Beauty’ have been selected as flowering plants, rather than for their great flavor.

Sage, *Salvia officinalis*, is the one perennial herb that comes readily from large, easy-to-handle seeds, and produces a very acceptable herb product. The flavor, so associated with poultry stuffing, has other uses as well. Once established, the plants live a long time with only an annual spring pruning necessary, in addition to regular harvesting.

Sage makes attractive silvery gray plants which can easily be worked into landscapes in a variety of ways. There are also several varieties of vegetatively propagated sages available. ‘Tricolor’ is striped with green, red, and white. ‘Golden’ has green leaves edged in attractive yellow. ‘Purple’ has leaves with an overall purple glow. None of these colored varieties is as hardy as the common green sort, unfortunately.

Sage makes beautiful flowers, which can be of use in the landscape, but for best herb production, severe spring pruning will discourage most flower production. Harvest can begin when leaves begin to mature in late spring and can continue into fall. Plants should not be cut back too severely in late fall, since this can threaten their winter survival.
Thyme, *Thymus spp.*, is a low-growing subshrub in the mint family, Lamiaceae. There are literally hundreds of varieties of thyme, some culinary, others decorative. For culinary purposes, either French or English will be the most agreeable with common recipes. Seed grown thymes may also make acceptable plants, but individual seed sources should be evaluated. For the classic varieties, cuttings are preferable, and root with surprising ease.

Most of the thymes will survive winter in Illinois pretty well. Adequate snow cover will improve winter survival. Most spread out and form dense mats that benefit from annual spring mowing to stimulate lush new growth. New plantings should be started every few years to avoid encroachment from perennial weeds. Thyme mixes well with other herbs in cooking, and its creeping form makes it a rock garden and edging favorite in the garden. In spring most varieties produce a stunning floral display.

**Tender Perennials**

**Bay Laurel, Laurus nobilis**, is a small tree from the Mediterranean area. It is somewhat difficult to propagate, either by seeds or cuttings, so buying started plants from a good source usually works best. Since it is not winter hardy over much of the U.S., it should be planted in a pot, so that it can be brought inside to survive the winter. Bay will survive fairly well in a cool, bright location, where it will not freeze but will go dormant. As you ready it for the outside in spring, acclimate it to full sun again gradually, so the broad leaves do not sunburn. Once acclimated, it will withstand the hottest location, such as a patio, lending a Mediterranean feel.

The plant can be pruned as a single-trunk tree, or as a multi-stemmed shrub. In most homes, the constraints of size probably dictate the latter. After a long season outdoors, the plant can be pruned back to decrease its size and to harvest the fresh, pungent leaves. Although they dry easily and will store fairly well in a glass jar, out of the sunlight, the flavor of fresh bay is infinitely more complex than that of the dried. Fresh leaves can be stored in a Ziploc bag in the refrigerator for two or more weeks. Try making a simple syrup infused with fresh bay leaves, which is good over ice cream or other desserts.

**Lemon Verbena, Aloysia triphylla**, has an intense flavor of sweet lemon zest, without the bitter aftertaste. The specific epithet refers to the common occurrence of three leaves at a node for this plant. This is fairly unique in the plant world. The plant has somewhat yellow-green, lanceolate leaves. Since it is not winter hardy, it should be potted in a fairly light medium to make hauling it inside and back out easier. Unlike some evergreen tender perennials, Lemon Verbena tends to be deciduous, losing all or most of its leaves as the days shorten in late fall into winter. Do not despair, they will return in the lengthening days of late February into March. Many a plant has been discarded as “dead” during this winter dormancy.

When the plant is actively growing, cuttings root easily, and new plants are quick to grow into new specimens. Since individual plants differ in leaf production, cuttings should be taken from a very leafy parent plant. A large plant kept near the kitchen will allow the harvest of tender branch tips and leaves, which are bruised, then used to flavor pitchers of ice water. Leaves can also be used fresh or dried to make a refreshing tisane.

**Rosemary, Rosmarinus officinalis**, is a tender perennial, which is probably not dependably hardy in any part of Illinois. Although there is only one species, there are a variety of types, from upright to prostrate, with flower colors from the standard blues to white or pink. The plants propagate easily from stem tip cuttings and make very acceptable plants in one season. If the plants can be overwintered in a bright house or greenhouse, they will quickly grow into magnificent specimens. It is not an easy plant to coax through the winter, however, particularly in a warm, dry room. A bright spot in a cool garage or porch area that will not freeze, probably gives the best chance of survival. Making friends with someone with greenhouse facilities can also be effective.

There are varieties of rosemary which can be started from seed, but like so many other perennial herbs, these will vary in type and flavor fairly widely. Rosemary is used sparingly for an accent in a variety of dishes. The flavor is vaguely like pine, but with some other complex undertones. Woody,
straight stems can be used as shish kebob skewers for a flavorful treat. When shopping for a culinary rosemary plant, look for one that smells like it would taste good, not one that reminds you of a Christmas tree.

**Sweet Marjoram**, *Origanum majorana*, is the last of the tender perennial herbs for this discussion. Actually, sweet marjoram is a perennial in the Deep South, but it normally winter kills in the Upper Midwest, and is treated as an annual. It grows easily from seed, though the seed and seedlings are fairly fine. Care should be taken to get the seedlings thinned while small. Once established, sweet marjoram is a hardy little plant. Because it works so well as an annual plant, it is probably not worth the effort to try to overwinter this herb.

Like so many of the other herbs, marjoram should be harvested regularly to keep flowering and seeding to a minimum. Sweet marjoram is used in a variety of ways; with eggs, meat, stuffing, and soup. If there is a sweet, almost perfume-like tastiness to some dish, sweet marjoram is often the mystery ingredient.

**More Unusual Perennials**

**Anise Hyssop**, *Agastache foeniculum*, is a fragrant, 3 to 4 foot plant in the mint family. It has showy, short, purple flower spikes, which are ambrosial to bees and butterflies. The fragrance is a blend of anise and mint, with anise predominating. It is a native prairie plant, which is a self-seeding, short-lived perennial, hardy to Zone 5.

A layer of young, tender leaves can be baked into a favorite lasagna, for a new taste treat. Older leaves can be used fresh or dried in an herbal tisane. Flowers make a striking edible garnish, and are an asset in the garden and in flower arrangements.

**Artemisia** is a genus of over 400 species of plants in the Asteraceae family. Wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium*, is one of the best known of this large group. Tarragon, already discussed above, is another. Many of the most popular species have gray foliage that makes them good for gardens viewed in darkness, by moonlight.

Wormwood is known for the use of its leaves and flowering tops into the infamous spirit, Absinthe. Talouise Lautrec and Vincent Van Gogh were noted devotees of this spirit, and Van Gogh is reputed to have been under the influence when he hacked off his ear and sent it to a lady friend. It is still used to flavor alcoholic beverages, such as Vermouth and Campari.

In the garden, it is a hardy plant, with a tendency to spread a little too aggressively. Its gray foliage is a perfect counterpoint to brighter colors in the garden. It can be cut for fresh arrangements, or dried for use in everlasting bouquets and wreaths.

**Bergamot**, *Monarda didyma*, is a very hardy herb in the mint family. A crown of petals tops the 2 to 3 foot plants. Leaves were used as a Colonial tea substitute when the tea tax was being resisted. Plants can be started from seed, or divisions. To get a named cultivar, vegetative propagation is necessary.

Plants will spread by rhizomes, forming widening clumps, unless they are subdued regularly. Its other common name, “Bee Balm” refers to its preference as a nectar source. Many color forms have been selected over the years. Powdery mildew is often a problem, and cultivars with some resistance have been selected. Since the plant is so vigorous, when it is grown in full sun with good air circulation, minimal permanent damage is usually done, although the plants may be unsightly after defoliation by a severe outbreak.

**Comfrey**, *Symphytum officinale*, is a lush, leafy clumping perennial herb in the Boraginaceae family. It is hardy to Zone 3. It can be propagated by seed, division, or rooting cuttings. It will be hard to remove from a location, once it is established there, so plant it where it can remain. Flowers are borne on short, one-sided racemes. They have a tubular, five-lobed corolla, which is white, yellow, or blue. There is a variegated form with cream-colored leaf margins.
Comfrey has been used traditionally to heal bone breaks, bruises, and sprains. There is some evidence that suggests that prolonged, heavy usage may cause liver toxicity, so internal use is often discouraged. External poulticing should still be safe. If in doubt, remember that the plant cannot hurt you while growing in the garden.

**Echinacea** is a genus with 9 species, all native to North America. By far the most widely planted in herb and perennial gardens has been *Echinacea purpurea*, the Purple Coneflower. Recent breeding work on interspecific hybrids has extended both the color range and the shape of the flowers, with white, yellow, pink, orange, and red cultivars available, but not a true deep purple, despite the name.

Plants can be started from seed or divisions, with the new cultivars being multiplied in tissue culture and sold as small individual plants. Most are hardy in Zones 3-9, but some of the new hybrids do not seem to be as long-lived as the species types.

Flowers can be used in fresh or dried arrangements, and are another great wildlife plant. Bees and butterflies love the nectar of the disk flowers, and birds, such as goldfinches love the seeds which follow.

Medicinally, Echinacea is used as an immune stimulant, best taken for short periods of stress or impending illness, then discontinued until needed again. Roots are most often extracted for medicinal use, but the whole plant is also sometimes used.

Elderberry, *Sambucus canadensis*, is often considered a woody weed in fencerows, along ditches, and around farmsteads. In many instances, only the local birds take much notice of this medium to large shrub. Flowers are used to produce elderflower cordial, elderflower syrup, batter-dipped fritters, and as a flavoring in pancakes and marshmallows. Because of possible diuretic effect, elder flowers should be used with caution if taken in addition to diuretic drugs. Fruit has also been used to make wines, cordials, marmalades, fruit pies, and relishes. Uncooked berries have a dark purple juice and are astringent and inedible, sometimes causing nausea, vomiting, or severe diarrhea. Cooking the fruit or the juice can temper these effects. Elder fruit contains more phosphorus and potassium than any other temperate fruit crop, and is also rich in vitamin C.

Medicinally, elder has been used for hundreds of years. There may be a measurable effect in treating flu, alleviating allergies, and boosting the overall respiratory system. A 2010 study discovered that *S. nigra* juice prevented viruses from infecting mucous membranes. An elderflower tea has been used to break dry fevers and stimulate perspiration, aid headache, indigestion, twitching eyes, dropsy, rheumatism, appendix inflammation, bladder or kidney infections, colds, influenza, and consumption.

Remember that the leaves, twigs, branches, seeds, and roots contain a cyanide-producing glycoside, which gives rise to cyanide as it is metabolized in the body.

**Fennel, Bronze**, *Foeniculum vulgare*, is the most winter hardy of the usually annual fennel group. Especially if given a good mulch of leaves or some other material, it will come back after most winters in Zone 5B and warmer. It may also survive in more northern areas in mild winters.

Bronze fennel has dark, smoky, fine-textured foliage, which makes a great contrast to brighter colors, particularly yellows and oranges. It can be started from seeds fairly easily. In fact, it will reseed a bit too much if not watched carefully. Butterfly larvae thrive on its foliage, bees and butterflies swoon on its flowers, and a variety of songbirds seek out its seeds, making it a triple threat wildlife plant.

**Hops**, *Humulus lupulus*, is a vigorous vining plant, with seed heads that are very useful, herbally. There are plants available of common brewing types, or the ‘Golden’ Hops, which has nice chartreuse leaves. Hops starts very well from root cuttings, and will cover fairly large arbors when mature. Unfortunately, Japanese Beetles love to chew on its foliage, some years more than others.

The cones are good for soothing stomachaches, and can promote sleep, often being used in dream pillows. New research is uncovering a host of anti-microbial actions of hops, too, so it may become a more important medicinal plant in the near future.
Horseradish, *Armoracia rusticana*, is a member of the Cabbage family, *Brassicaceae*, for which the state of Illinois is world famous. The tri-county area on the Illinois side of the Mississippi, east of St. Louis, still grows over half of the U.S. supply of this pungent herb. Collinsville, Illinois, annually hosts the International Horseradish Festival, the first full weekend of June each year.

Although it will live for many, many years, once established, commercially, it is replanted and grown on an annual basis for production of the large roots most familiar in supermarket produce sections. Root cuttings 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch in diameter and 8-12 inches long are planted in late fall or early spring. The plants flourish through the long growing season, and finally die back after a hard freeze in the late fall. The root cutting will have expanded to a pound or more in size, and will have developed side branch roots, many of which will be the proper size for next year’s planting. At this point, roots of the best quality can be harvested. Any roots left behind will sprout and grow, which gives horseradish its reputation for being hard to eradicate, once established. Roots can be stored in the ground over the winter for early spring harvest, or in moist cold storage.

Hyssop, *Hyssopus officinalis*, is a compact, fine textured perennial plant, with a strong, slightly medicinal smell. Plants make a nice edging in the garden, and flower from June through August. Flower color will be in shades of white, pink, and blue. Although it does have some bitterness, Hyssop is sometimes used to flavor salads, soup, liqueurs, stews, and stuffing. It can also be dried for tea.

Plants may be started from seeds, cuttings, or division. Cuttings root best from young, tender, actively growing stem tips. Older clumps will benefit from division or severe renovation every 4 or 5 years, to keep them attractive and actively growing.

Horehound, *Marrubium vulgare*, is hardy, bushy perennial plant with wooly leaves and stems. It can grow up to 2 feet high and across. It can be grown from seed in early spring and transplanted into the garden, spaced about 12 to 18 inches apart. Once established, clumps can be divided or cuttings rooted to increase the supply. Remove spent flowers to prevent too many seedlings from appearing.

The best known use for this herb is as a soothing agent for sore throats. It has a mucilaginous quality that coats the throat and eases the pain. In addition, it is an attractive gray plant in the garden, helping to make other things look more appealing. The branches can be harvested and dried for later use.

Lamb’s Ears, *Stachys byzantina*, is a low growing plant in the vegetative state, which develops flower stalks 12 to 18 inches tall, once a year in the spring. It is in the mint family and does spread a bit to form solid clumps of medium-large, crushed velvet-like silvery leaves. The soft, grayish leaves have been used as wound dressing.

Because flowers are not outstanding, some people remove them as they form, preferring the low soft silver mound of foliage. Plants can be divided, or offshoots rooted to increase the stock.

Lavender, *Lavandula officinalis*, is a highly perfumed plant. Both flowers and foliage can be utilized to extract essential oils that can be used in perfumery, cooking, and medicine. While there are several species of lavender available, *L. angustifolia* is the only one with authentic scent and flavor for these uses. Leaves are slender, and usually covered with a grayish bloom. Flowers are in terminal spikes on long stems, whose corollas come in shades of purple, pink, and white.

While lavender can be grown from seed, choice cultivars must be propagated asexually. ‘Munstead’ and ‘Hidcote’ are two of the most hardy and dependable for the Midwest climate. Plants do not stand dampness well, so the planting bed should be amended to drain very well. A layer of white material, such as crushed oyster shells, can be used as a mulch to reflect sunlight onto the underside of the leaves, to help minimize damage from summer humidity.

Harvest flower heads just as the first blossoms mature. They will remain attached to the stem better, and the essential oil content is at its peak at this time.
**Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*,** is a loosely-branched upright perennial in the mint family. The aroma and flavor is strongly lemon, with a minty undertone. Fresh or dried, it can be used in teas, salads, or other culinary dishes. Lemon Balm has some anti-microbial activity, and is used to acclimate bees to a new hive.

Lemon Balm is easy to start from seed, stem tip cuttings, or division. Plants should be set about 2 feet apart. If it is grown in the garden, flower heads should be cut off before the seeds mature, or it will invade remote corners of the yard. Repeated harvest for drying or fresh usage should be able to keep flowering to a minimum. It will thrive in full sun, but will also tolerate considerable shade.

**Rose, *Rosa spp.*,** has a long history of herbal usage. Petals are edible and can be used to garnish salads. Oils extracted from rose petals are used in perfumery, and also in cooking. Older varieties, such as Apothecary, Damask, and Rugosa are very useful in the herb garden. Rose hips are a great source of Vitamin C and other nutrients. Rose hip tea is recommended for a variety of ailments, as well as just being a tasty pleasant beverage.

Most roses are familiar plants, with prickles on the stem and uneven pinnately-compound leaves. Flowers are solitary or in branched clusters or corymbs at the end of short branches. Petals are usually in multiples of 5, although occasionally 4-petaled blossoms will arise. Hips contain the true fruit, the achenes, and can be hard or pulpy, vary in size, and turn from green through yellow to shades of red.

Species roses may be started from seeds, but most cultivars are propagated by division, stem cuttings, and grafting or budding on a strong rootstock. Spacing is dependent on the size of mature specimens of a given cultivar.

**Salad Burnet, *Poterium sanguisorba*,** is not too well known, but greatly appreciated by those who know to grow it for use as a sprightly addition to salads, with a somewhat cucumber-like taste. It is a rosette-forming clump, up to a foot in height, with compound leaves arching out from the plant’s crown. Leaflets have deeply toothed margins. Flowers are small and pinkish, borne in rounded heads. Spent flowers should be deadheaded, to encourage more vegetative growth.

Plants may be divided in spring before growth begins. If seeds are left to mature on the plant, they will self-sow, possibly a little too readily. Seeds can be sown in late fall or early spring. Seedlings are thinned to 12-15 inches apart. Full sun and slightly alkaline soil give best growth. Once established, they need little attention.

**Santolina, *Santolina chamaecyparissus; C. rosmarinifolia; C. pinnata*,** the Gray, Rosemary, and Green Santolinas, are perennial subshrubs, which grow 1 to 2 feet in height. They are dependably hardy to Zone 6, but may survive in colder zones with snow cover or protection. They are much-branched, compact plants, which may have a tendency to flop a bit later in the season.

Since seed production is very limited, layering is often used to propagate these plants. Stem tip cuttings taken when the plant is first actively growing in the spring seem to have the best chance of rooting, although they are still slow and somewhat undependable.

Santolinas do best in full sun, in well drained, sandy soils. *Pythium* wilt of the foliage and sudden root wilts can be avoided with excellent drainage. An annual hard pruning in spring helps to rejuvenate the plants, keep them more compact, and resist flopping later in the season.

**Sorrel, *Rumex acetosa; Rumex scutatus*,** is interesting, because two species get confused. *R. acetosa*, the French Sorrel, is not as easily found as *R. scutatus*, Garden Sorrel. Garden Sorrel is easy to grow from seed, forming large, arrowhead-shaped leaf blades on long, sturdy petioles. French Sorrel, is a much more low-growing plant, forming a low mound of smaller, rounded triangular leaves. It is considered the more desirable of the two.

Sorrel is used to add an acid bite to soups and other dishes. Since this comes from oxalic acid in the leaves, people with kidney stone history, and those with arthritis should probably avoid it or use it sparingly and infrequently.
**Southernwood**, *Artemisia abrotanum*, is a hardy, many-branched perennial with finely-divided, feathery leaves which are slightly downy and gray green. Flowers are small and inconspicuous, yellowish-white, in loose panicles, and may not occur at all on northern grown plants.

Southernwood has an essential oil, absinthol, that is effective against insects, intestinal worms, and some microorganisms. It is first and foremost an ornamental, with its fine, feathery, exotic leaves, and gray-green color. It will grow 3 to 5 feet in height, and makes a good mid-border plant. Cut and dried, the plant makes a good wreath base.

It can be propagated from cuttings or division in the spring. Plants should be spaced 2 to 3 feet apart. Southernwood should be pruned annually in spring to encourage compact, attractive growth.

**Tansy**, *Tanacetum vulgare*, is a rampant large mass of thin stalks growing 3 to 6 feet high, and dark green, fern-like compound leaves. Flowers are in loose clusters of composite heads. It spreads by aggressive rhizomes and by seeds, making it a potential garden escapee and thug. The leaves have a distinctive, not altogether pleasant odor. Taken in quantity, tansy can be toxic, so proceed with caution.

Tansy can be used, carefully, as an ornamental plant, in the back of the garden. Because of the presence of Thujone, its culinary and medicinal uses have been curtailed considerably. It is said to repel ants, Colorado potato beetle, flea beetles, imported cabbageworm, Japanese beetle, and squash bug, so an experimental strained decoction of the leaves might be used as a deterrent spray.

**Winter Savory**, *Satureja montana*, is a somewhat short-lived perennial, semi-evergreen plant, which forms a fine-textured compact mounded bush 6 to 12 inches tall and 12-24 inches across. It should be winter hardy through most of Illinois, although snow cover or a light mulch may help it through in northern regions. Excess winter moisture can be deadly, so care should be taken not to overdo the mulch. A raised bed will help with soil drainage.

Since the seeds germinate slowly and seedlings are tiny, it may be best to start them in cell packs and transplant to the garden after they are established, spacing them 12-18 inches apart. Plants will stand up to shearing, if a compact, hedge-like appearance is desired.

Winter Savory has a stronger flavor than Summer Savory, with a resinous, piney aftertaste that some people find objectionable. It has the advantage of starting out early in the spring and also staying green and usable in fall, after frost has blackened the Summer Savory.

**Yarrow**, *Achillea millefolium*, is an erect perennial herb with lovely fernlike foliage. It is covered with silky or wooly hairs, giving it an overall grayish-green appearance. Masses of numerous white flower heads are borne in flat-topped clusters at the terminal ends of the stems. It flowers June through September.

Yarrow has been used widely for medicinal purposes. It has the ability to staunch blood flow in wounds, and contains a compound that hastens the clotting of blood. It may also keep wounds from becoming inflamed. It also contains an aspirin-like compound which may exhibit some analgesic properties. A few people may be allergic to yarrow, developing contact dermatitis after coming into contact with the plant.

Plants can be divided in the spring or easily propagated from seed. They grow best in full sun in a variety of soils, but will not tolerate a soggy site. Plants should be spaced 12 to 18 inches apart. Some colorful flower types have been developed and selected recently, and clones of specific colors are available.