

HERB SPIRAL

Planting herbs in a spiral is a cost effective, space saving way of growing for a variety of uses. The helical shape is also commonly encountered in the plant and animal kingdom (for example the cross-section of some plants and the shell of a snail), in mathematics (Archimedes' spiral), in mysticism (Celtic spiral) and in astronomy (the galaxy).

Definition

The herb spiral is a structure designed to grow plants that creates a range of microclimatic conditions in a small space – zones with direct sunlight, shade, higher or lower humidity. Its construction consists of stones or old bricks placed in the ground in the shape of a snail shell. This shape not only helps to strengthen the structure, but also compensates for the thermal differences between day and night. During the warmer day the stones warm up and at night pass this accumulated heat to the rest of the herb spiral. Between the stones the spiral is filled with gravel or sand at the bottom to support drainage and then soil as the growing medium for the herbs.

Procedure

Choose a suitably sunny place with a space approximately 2 x 2 metres (in this case the recommended spiral height is one metre). In case of smaller space, reduce the spiral height appropriately (1:2).

Draw out your design and include different herb species in different levels. Consider their demands on sunlight (the north side will be mostly in partial shade), moisture (the top of the spiral will be drier and the bottom will retain more moisture), the rate of growth and the colour and scent of the flower (if you want your spiral to be varied and fragrant). Rosemary is an example herb that would suit being planted near the top of the spiral as it likes to sun and can survive in drier conditions. Herbs that would suit being planted in the middle include Lavender, Sage and Thyme. The lower layer will support herbs such as Bee Balm, Chives and Parsley. The dampest places in the lowest layer will support Peppermint.



When you have identified a location, make use of string and a stick to create a circular spiral shape on the ground that can be built up in layers. Remove the turf and dig in stones to form the large base circle. Fill the

base circle with gravel or sand and then soil. Plant the herbs around the edge of the stones, create the next level and repeat.



Tips

- Your herbs will need watering, so consider who will do this and when.
- In the herb spiral, place a whiteboard with pictures of planted herbs and information about their use, when they can be harvested and the maintenance required.

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