

HERBS

IN THE CLASSROOM

New Hampshire Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.

www.nhharvestofthemonth.org

History

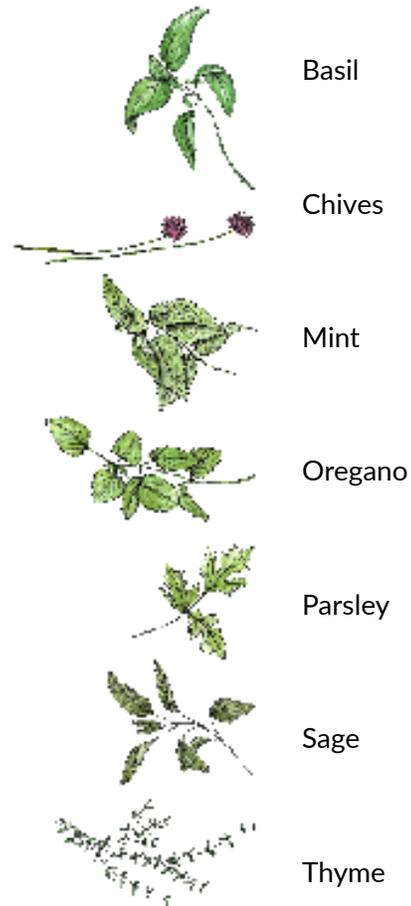
A vast array of herbs can be grown in New Hampshire—they can add punch and depth to any dish! The three herbs covered below are all members of the mint family, *Lamiaceae*.

- **Basil's** flavor spans from sweet to spicy to citrusy, depending on the variety. Its leaves can be green, deep red, or purple. Basil is native to India and is commonly used in Laotian, Mediterranean (especially Italian), Thai, and Vietnamese cooking. In New Hampshire, basil is grown as an annual.
- **Mint** is in the genus, *Mentha*; its most popular species are peppermint and spearmint, due to their intensely aromatic oils. The herb is native to the Mediterranean and grows as a perennial in Vermont.
- **Oregano** is native to northern Europe and is a prominent ingredient in Mediterranean and French cuisine. Oregano grows as a perennial in New Hampshire.

Fun Facts

- Basil was and is highly regarded by many cultures. In India, Hindus consider it sacred. In ancient Greece, it was referred to as *basilikon*, meaning “royal” and in Italy, it’s regarded as a symbol of love.
- Basil was used in the embalming process in ancient Egypt.
- The Greeks and Romans considered oregano to be a symbol of happiness; its Latin name, *origanum*, is derived from the Greek words for “mountain” and “joy”. During marriage ceremonies, couples wore laurels comprised of oregano.
- Mint was once used to add fragrance to homes and temples.

SOME TYPES OF HERBS:



Reading Corner

Children's Books

- » *A Kid's Herb Book*, by Lesley Tierra
- » *The Spice Alphabet Book*, by Jerry Pallotta
- » *The Yummy Alphabet Book*, by Jerry Pallotta

Cookbook

- » *Herbs & Spices: The Cook's Reference*, by Jill Norman

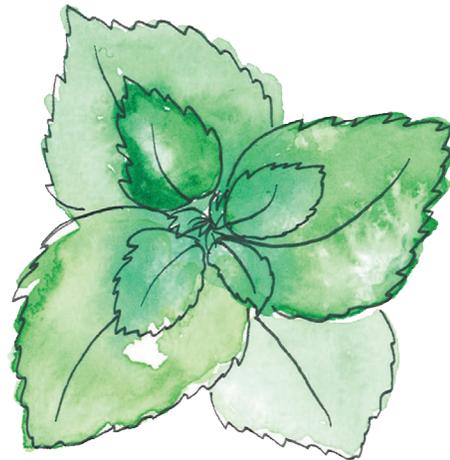
Sources: *High Mowing Seeds*, *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*, *The Visual Food Encyclopedia*

HERBS

IN THE CLASSROOM | PAGE 2

Benefits

- **Basil:** The volatile oil of basil helps to relieve digestive issues, headaches, and poor circulation; some varieties contain anti-bacterial properties.
- **Mint:** Peppermint (*Mentha piperata*), contains the organic compound menthol, which is known for aiding in digestion, muscular pain and headaches.
- **Oregano:** The volatile oil of oregano contains the phenols (aromatic organic compounds) thymol and carvacrol, which are strong antimicrobial agents; it is also an extremely rich source of antioxidants.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Homeroom | Tea Time

Supplies needed:

Quart-size glass canning jars or other type of sealable glass container, strainer, ½-cup per jar of coarsely cut herb(s) of choice (catnip, chamomile, ginger, lavender, lemon balm, mint), water and a sunlit window (5-8 hours of direct sunlight)

Directions:

1. Fill jars with room temperature water and herb(s) of choice, seal, shake until you see a bit of foam, then place in sun.
2. Gently shake throughout the day.
3. Strain and place in fridge overnight, or serve over ice at the end of the day. Be sure to drink the tea within 24 hours for optimal taste and freshness.
4. If the taste is too strong for your kids, try adding honey, lemon or lime.

History | Herb Origins

Directions:

1. Explore the origin and cultural background of various herbs, their medicinal properties and what cuisines they are popular in today.
2. This is a good opportunity to have students ask their parents what herbs they use when they cook.

English | The Smell and Taste of Herbs

Supplies needed:

Various herbs—aim for 5 or 6

Directions:

1. Have your class sample a variety of herbs focusing on smell and taste.
2. Ask students to transfer their observations into a list of adjectives. Once students have done this individually, form a class list of the descriptors.
3. Have students vote on their favorite herb!

Science | Explore Herb Families

Supplies needed:

Live plants or images of herbs from various families.

Directions:

1. Talk to students about the Latin names plants are given: both the binomial or scientific name and the family name.
2. Discuss characteristics that plants from the same family share. Compare and contrast between families or among families.

Source: GMFTS

HARVEST LESSONS

For extended, standards-based lesson plans, visit:
www.nhharvestofthemoth.org/harvest-lessons