

Favorite Herbs for Tea

When it's time for tea, brew up a pot using plants you have grown in your very own tea garden.

Mints, including Spearmint, Peppermint, Blue Balsam Mint, and Apple Mint

Basil- Sweet Basil as well as Baja, Cinnamon, Lime, and Lemon

Lemon Verbena, Lemon Balm, and Lemon Grass

Chamomile, Borage, Scented Geraniums, especially varieties of Rose and Lemon

Parsely, Sage, Rosemary, Thyme

*Hoary Mountain Mint, *Threadleaf Mountain Mint

*Sweet Goldenrod, *Anise Hyssop, *Bee Balm, and all its monarda relations

The above selections all grow well in East Tennessee. An asterisk indicates they are native wildflowers. In all cases, use the leaves of the plant, either fresh or dried. Flowers may be brewed, too. Some of these herbs can be a bit too exuberant in their willingness to grow and spread. These you may grow in pots, or in isolated areas set aside just for them.

A sweet and very wise customer of mine confided in me once that her favorite way of making tea is to go into the garden and pluck a leaf of two of whatever herbs strike her fancy, and brew them all up together. The one constant is that she almost always includes a single borage leaf; she says borage helps to balance all the flavors. (To do this safely, one must know one's herbs...)

When brewing tea to use as a refreshing beverage, use the following technique to produce the perfect cup. Place your herbs into the teapot, either loose or in an appropriately sized tea ball or bag. Heat cold, fresh water to boiling, and allow to cool slightly. Add hot water to teapot, quickly close it up tightly, and cover with a tea cozy. Allow the tea to brew a length of time appropriate for that particular tea, and for your particular taste. (Green tea should brew no more than two minutes, herbal teas about three.) Remove herbs and serve immediately. If brewing for iced tea, pour into glass jar, close and allow to cool, then refrigerate.

When brewing tea for medicinal use, allow the herbs to steep longer, 10 minutes or more.

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