FREE BEGINNER FIELD GUIDE

10 Herbs Every Beginner Should Know

A safety-first reference for starting a small, responsible home apothecary

Start with two herbs, not twenty. Learn the botanical name, plant part, preparation, and cautions before adding another.

Practical skills • Responsible learning • Clear documentation

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Educational use only. This resource is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent disease. Herbs can cause adverse effects and interact with medicines, supplements, laboratory tests, and surgery. Verify plant identity, plant part, contraindications, interactions, and preparation guidance. Seek qualified medical advice for pregnancy, breastfeeding, children, chronic illness, medication use, serious or persistent symptoms, and emergencies.

The five-part herb check

- Identity: exact botanical name and plant part.
- Person: age, pregnancy/breastfeeding, allergies, diagnoses, liver/kidney health.
- Products: medicines, OTC drugs, supplements, and other herbs.
- Preparation: food, tea, tincture, extract, topical, or essential oil.
- Purpose: mild self-care education vs. a symptom needing medical evaluation.

The ten-herb study set

Herb	Part & study value	Important cautions
Peppermint *Mentha × piperita*	**Leaf** Aromatic infusion; digestive-comfort tradition.	May worsen reflux. Essential oil is not equivalent to tea.
German chamomile *Matricaria chamomilla*	**Flower** Floral infusion; relaxation and digestive-comfort traditions.	Daisy-family allergy; possible sedative/warfarin interactions; limited pregnancy data.
Ginger *Zingiber officinale*	**Rhizome** Culinary use and infusion/decoction study; researched for some nausea.	May cause heartburn; discuss concentrated use with blood thinners or before surgery.
Lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*	**Leaf** Aromatic tea; traditionally calming.	May add to sedation; discuss thyroid treatment and pregnancy/breastfeeding.
Calendula *Calendula officinalis*	**Flower** Topical oil/compress study for intact skin.	Possible daisy-family allergy; not for deep or infected wounds.
Marshmallow *Althaea officinalis*	**Root** Cold infusion; teaches mucilage-rich extraction.	May affect oral medicine absorption; ask a pharmacist about spacing.
Nettle *Urtica dioica*	**Leaf** Cooked food or infusion; traditional nutritive use.	Fresh plant stings; discuss diabetes, blood-pressure, diuretic, or anticoagulant medicines.
Rose *Rosa spp.*	**Petal/hip** Food-like tea and sensory study.	Use pesticide-free material meant for consumption; strain hip hairs/seeds.
Thyme *Thymus vulgaris*	**Leaf** Culinary herb and aromatic infusion study.	Culinary use, extracts, and essential oil have different safety profiles.
Oatstraw *Avena sativa*	**Aerial parts** Mild traditional restorative beverage.	Avoid with oat allergy; choose certified gluten-free when medically required.

How to study one herb

• Write its common name, botanical name, family, and plant part.

• Inspect purchased dried material: color, cut, aroma, dryness, and supplier lot.

• Read one authoritative monograph for interactions and contraindications.

• Prepare only a suitable, modest, label-directed form.

• Record your preparation, timing, response, and any unwanted effects.

• Change one variable at a time.

Your first two herb cards

Complete one card before adding a second herb. Use an authoritative monograph and the product label; do not rely on social-media summaries alone.

Herb card 1

Common name / botanical name / plant part:

Preparation and why it fits this plant part:

Main cautions and interaction questions:

What I observed:

Herb card 2

Common name / botanical name / plant part:

Preparation and why it fits this plant part:

Main cautions and interaction questions:

What I observed:

Beginner safety card

Do not ingest wild plants identified only by an app, photograph, or common name. Do not casually swallow essential oils. Do not use herbs to delay emergency or necessary medical care.

Stop and seek urgent help for trouble breathing, facial or throat swelling, fainting, seizure, chest pain, uncontrolled bleeding, or suspected poisoning. In the United States, Poison Help is 1-800-222-1222.

Your first seven days

Day	Action
1	Complete the five-part safety screen and update your medicine/supplement list.
2	Choose herb one; confirm botanical name and plant part.
3	Read an authoritative monograph and complete its caution section.
4	Prepare only a suitable, modest, label-directed form; record it.
5	Choose herb two and repeat identity research.
6	Compare the two herb cards: preparation, cautions, and evidence.
7	Review your notes and list questions before adding another herb.

Next step

Use this reference to choose two herbs. The complete Beginner's Herbalist system adds preparation methods, sourcing, storage, worksheets, and a 30-day learning path.