

Tips For Getting Started with Gift Baskets

It's not hard to make an herbal gift basket. First pick a theme—bath, bed, teas, or maybe a friend has a new baby. Then gather a selection of appropriate herbs and a few related, fun items, place them in a pretty or clever container—and you've created a thoughtful, sure-to-be appreciated gift. Herbal gift baskets can be designed to suit any personality, for any occasion.



» Think outside the basket. Gift baskets have to be baskets, of course. Put kitchen supplies in a colander, gardening gifts in a watering can, and teas in a large mug or a teapot. Tie with a festive bow or some raffia, and include some bells for the holidays. If you use a basket, line it with something unexpected, like a pillowcase or baby bib.

- » Do double (or quadruple) duty. For economy, efficiency, and fun, make several gift baskets at once. That doesn't mean they need to be identical. Maybe you'll make a collection of drawer sachets for your mom and a selection of herbs for crafting sachets for your sister. Or perhaps you'll concoct some herbal toiletries for several people on your gift list but vary each basket with fun additions (like a lovely hand towel in one and a back scrubber in another).
- » Divvy the herbs into little jars or sacks, tie with a festive ribbon, and label each with a gift tag or sticker.
- » Enhance your gift with related surprises, like a tea strainer in the tea lover's basket and a bedtime story in a child's bedtime basket.

- » Customize your creation. If your recipient enjoys crafting, for example, by all means include directions and supplies for a project, like making her own herbal skincare products. But if she's pressed for time, you'll want to make the herbal products for her or give her other ready-to-enjoy items like herbal teas.



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herb savvy

Gift Baskets

How to make...

- » Herbal Tea Baskets
- » Skin and Hair Care Baskets
- » Bedtime Baskets

... and more!



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Q&A

You mentioned including a fixative in the sleep pillow. What's that?



A fixative is an ingredient that helps maintain the scent of a blend, in this case to preserve the herbal scent of the pillow. (Fixatives are also commonly used in potpourris, sachets, and pomanders.) Orris root powder, orange peel, vetiver, gum benzoin, oak moss and vanilla beans act as fixatives—melding and slowing the evaporation of the scents.

I'd like to create my own tea blend to give as a gift. Where do I start?

Gather a combination of the tea herbs you most enjoy. Then start combining and taste testing. Good choices include mints (for fresh flavor and serving as a solid base for other herbs), "lemons" (like lemongrass, lemon verbena, lemon balm and lemon peel) for a refreshing note; flowers like rose and chamomile for fragrance (or hibiscus for color and zip); spices like cinnamon, cloves, fennel and allspice for warmth; roots like licorice, sarsaparilla, dandelion and chicory for body; and berries like rosehips and cranberry for color and a fruity taste. You don't have to have items from each of these categories; in fact, just one or two is a better place to start. As you blend, think about the scent, color, and taste of the tea. Take notes. And have fun.



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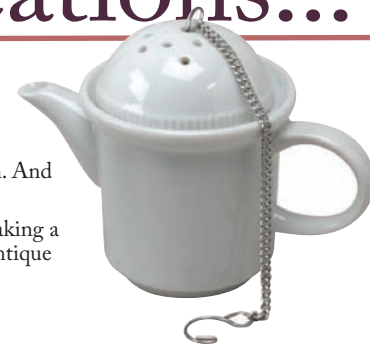
Customize Your Creations...

Herbal Tea Basket

Container: A basket lined with a cloth napkin; a large mug; a teapot.

Herbs: A favorite tea or a selection of popular loose teas: chamomile, peppermint, hibiscus, lemon balm. And of course your signature herbal tea blend. (No signature tea? Invent one!)

Other items: Tea strainers or mesh tea balls, pretty tea tidies, reusable cotton teabags; directions for making a perfect pot of tea; a snack for serving with tea (like scones or a scone mix), a distinctive mug or pretty antique tea cup and saucer.



Herbal Bath Basket

Container: An over-the-tub organizer or a basket lined with a fluffy washcloth.

Herbs: A selection of herbs for bathing. You can put these in cheesecloth or place in reusable cloth bags, and tie with pretty ribbons for hanging over the tub faucet. Include a little note about the effects of the herb. Peppermint is cooling and astringent, for example, while chamomile is relaxing and moisturizing, rosemary is rejuvenating, lavender is relaxing and cleansing, linden flowers are soothing, and rose blossoms are aromatic and moisturizing. For relaxing sore or tired muscles, include agrimony, burdock root, comfrey leaf, mugwort herb, sage leaf, and sassafras root bark.

Other items: A loofah or mesh sponge; a pretty hand towel, rolled and tied; soap; a candle or aromatherapy diffuser and oils for added atmosphere.

For a child's herbal bath basket, use a bucket and include a bath toy or two.



Skin or Hair Care Basket

Container: A basket or a large cosmetic tote.

Herbs: Herbs for making skin toners, cleansers, rinses. Include a note about the properties of each herb. For example: chamomile is soothing and moisturizing, elder is an astringent, lavender is good for oily skin, mint is cooling and invigorating, rosehips moisturize and soften, yarrow cleanses. You can provide instructions or make the products yourself and include the recipes along with them in the basket.

Other items: A natural bristle hairbrush; lightweight cotton gloves and/or socks (for putting on hands and feet while moisturizing); a lovely, soft washcloth or hand towel; a hand mirror; a compact; a bar of natural soap.



Cleaning Basket

Container: A cleaning bucket or a small galvanized pail.

Herbs: Cleansing herbs (like lavender, eucalyptus, thyme leaf, lemongrass, and peppermint) and/or cleansing products you create from herbs, like lavender carpet freshener, all-purpose thyme leaf cleanser, lemongrass glass spritzer, rose petal sink scrubber.

Other items: Natural bristle cleaning brushes, colorful cotton cloths, containers for cleansers, other supplies for making your own cleansers (like cornstarch, vinegar, and baking soda), a book on making and using natural cleansers.

Bedtime Basket

Container: A basket lined with a pretty pillowcase.

Herbs: Relaxing herbs like German chamomile flowers, dandelion leaf, lavender flowers, lemon balm, sage leaf, skullcap, St. Johnswort herb, valerian root.

Other items: a relaxing CD, a tea strainer or mesh tea ball, a sleep pillow. (Make your own sleep pillow with relaxing herbs and a powdered fixative. To keep the pillow soft, wrap the herbs in a little cotton batting, then place inside the pillowcase.)

For a child's bedtime basket, include a stuffed animal or doll, a lullaby CD, and a bedtime story.

Baby Basket

Container: A diaper bag or a basket lined with a baby bib.

Herbs: Herbal baby care products you've made yourself or herbs for making baby care products, along with descriptions of their uses. For example: calendula flowers are anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory—good for salves, lotions and oils; chamomile flowers are calming, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic—good for salves, baths, room sprays, lotions and oils, powders, shampoos; elder flowers are anti-inflammatory—good for salves and powders; lavender is relaxing, cleansing, soothing and reviving—good for salves, powders, baths, and shampoos; rose flowers and petals are soothing and astringent—good for powders, baths, and massage oils; and yarrow is anti-inflammatory—good as an astringent and for making salves.

Other items: Directions for making talc-free baby powder, baby bottom salve, baby oil and lotions, nursery room spray, baby shampoo, etc.; a baby comb and brush; a baby toy or book, booties or socks.