The complete book of herbs

A practical guide to growing & using herbs

Lesley Bremness

Published in association with the National Trust
You truly could not ask for a more complete reference on growing and using herbs. Lesley Bremness’ book, beautifully illustrated throughout with sumptuous color photographs, is the first book I turn to for all my herb-related questions, whether they relate to garden planning, how tall a particular herb will grow, or an herbal remedy for dry skin. She provides extensive, well-organized, easy-to-read information on the cultivation and uses of perhaps 100 herbs, going well beyond the "usual suspects" to include such herbs as Elecampane, Melilot, and Houseleek. One of the best aspects of the book is its 100+ page "Herbal Index." A full page (sometimes two) is dedicated to each variety, with good-sized color photos depicting the stem, leaf, seed, flower, root, dried flowers, dried leaves, crushed roots, other varieties, etc. A small photo tops of the growing plant tops a sidebar. This approach makes herb identification much easier than the books that rely on the garden glam shots where the herb looks gorgeous but its particulars can be difficult to see. Each herb page begins with a description of any lore historically ascribed to the plan and perhaps the origins of its name. For instance, the Borage description notes that the Old Masters often used the "beautiful pure blue" flowers to paint the Madonna’s robe. The sidebars in the Herbal Index pack an amazing amount of information into a relatively small amount of space: Details about cultivation, including soil and sunlight preferences, harvesting and preservation, and the decorative, culinary, household, cosmetic, and medicinal uses of its various parts. More details on the uses can be found in the "Using Herbs" sections.

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