

Herbs can stimulate all the senses and are an ideal plant to grow in any school. Most varieties are easy to raise from cuttings or seed and they can be grown in many different ways. Most do best in a sunny position, though mint, chervil and chives are all happy in the shade. Because of their cultural links, herbs are also well suited to historical or symbolic plantings. Smaller herbs which make neat plants are also good for planting in patterns.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### Foundation Stage

1,2,4,6

### History

KS1 – 1ab, 2ab, 3, 4ab, 5, 6abd

KS2 – 1ab, 2ab, 3, 4ab, 5abc, 6, 7, 8b

KS3 – 1, 2ab, 3ab, 4ab, 5abc, 7abcde, 8

### Art & Design

KS1 – 1ab, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

KS2 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

KS3 – 1abc, 2abc, 3ab, 4abc, 5abcd

### Design & Technology

KS1 – 1abcde, 2abcde, 3ab, 4ab, 5abc

KS2 – 1abcd, 2abcde, 3abc, 4ab, 5abc

KS3 – 1abcde, 2abcde, 3abc, 4bc, 6ab, 7b

### Science

KS1 – SC1, SC2

KS2 – SC1, SC2

KS3 – SC1, SC2

KS4 – SC1

### PSHE & Citizenship

KS1 – 1ac, 2abc, 3a, 5abcd

KS2 – 1c, 2ahj, 3a, 4a, 5ade

## HOW TO MAKE a Raised Medieval Herb Bed

For the Growing Schools Garden, Mapledene Early Years Centre, London, produced a raised medieval herb bed, with the help of the Geffrye Museum.

To create a raised bed that will stand up to the rigours of school life, it is advisable to create an inner structure, which can then be clad with a more authentic material, such as hurdles. Mapledene used treated timber, though you could alternatively use stone or brick.

To follow their design, to create a bed 1m x 2m x 25cm high you need six hardwood or treated softwood posts 10cm x 10cm x 1.5m and 30 planks 15cm x 2.5cm x 1m. Ask the timber merchant to cut slots in the posts 2.5cm deep, and wide enough to take the planks. The four corner posts need the slots cut in adjacent sides, and the two centre posts need slots cut in opposite sides. Slot the planks into the uprights to create a rectangular frame and secure each end of each plank with a screw. Cement the upright posts 0.5m in to the ground. Once the cement has set, the bed can be clad with willow or hazel hurdles, split logs or any other locally-available material to give a rustic effect.

Next, fill the bed ready for planting. Weed-free garden soil is the best thing to use provided it has a good crumbly texture. If the soil is heavy and has lots of clay in it, mix in grit and garden compost, leaf mould or second-hand potting compost (one bucket per barrow load of soil). Alternatively, use bought compost – growing bags are usually the cheapest source – though this will require topping up annually. To save effort and expense, the lower third of the bed can be filled with rubble or even broken up polystyrene packaging. Half a metre of soil is plenty for herbs.

Spend some time researching the herbs you are going to plant and you can find out lots of interesting facts. For example, sweet woodruff was historically used in potpourri and to scent linens, chamomile served as a tea to relax the facial muscles; and mint as a symbol of hospitality is mentioned by the Roman poet Ovid.

English literature is rich in references to herbs. In Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' Oberon, king of the fairies, describes his wife Titania's favourite resting place:

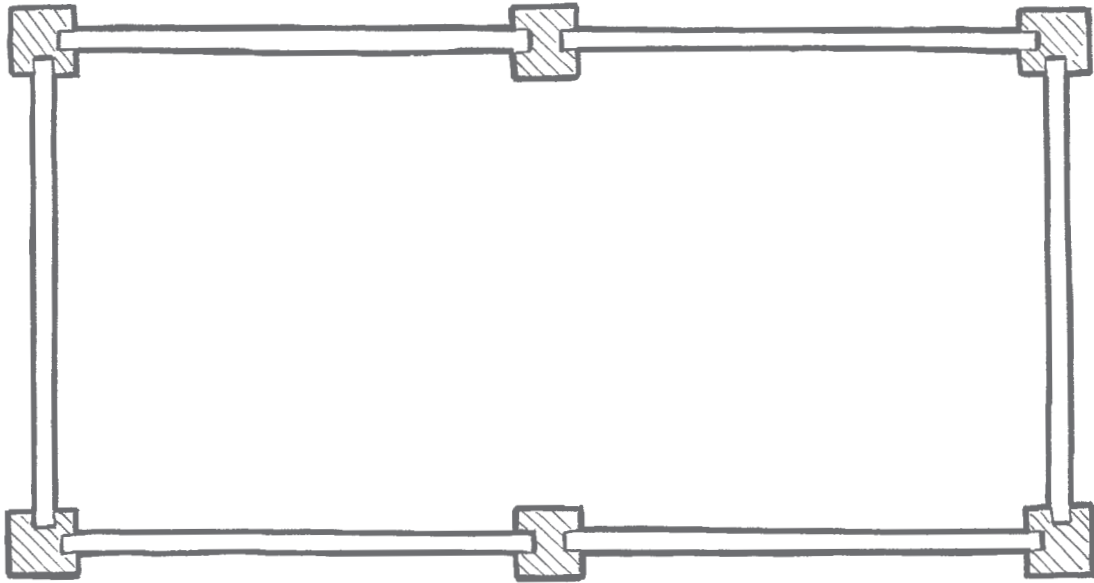
*"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows"*

and Titania's diminutive servants bear plant names: Mustard Seed, Peas-blossom.

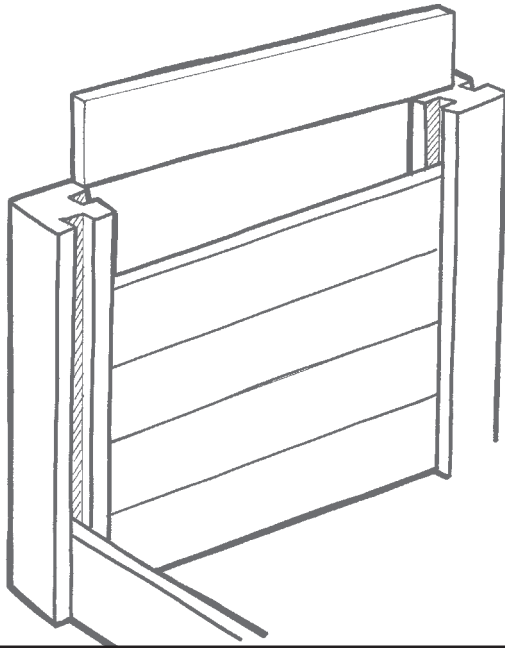
The tragic figure of Ophelia in the mad scene in 'Hamlet' famously lists the traditional significance of many common plants: rosemary for remembrance, pansies for thoughts, etc, showing how the names of herbs often give a semantic clue to their properties. Lavender was used in laundering clothes, sage has an essential oil now found to improve memory and sagacity.

However, as not all herbs are suitable for culinary use, it is important to label them very clearly – see the factsheet on plant labels for some creative ideas.

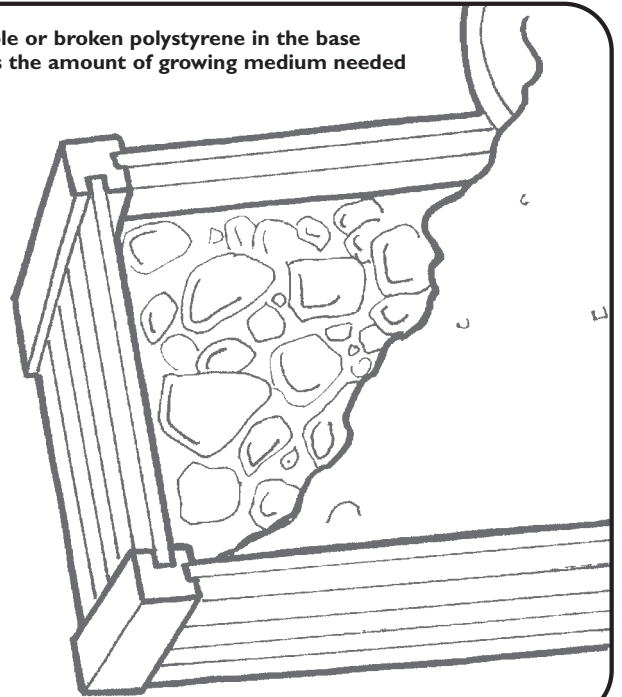
1 Plan of the raised bed



2 The planks slot into position



3 Rubble or broken polystyrene in the base reduces the amount of growing medium needed



#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For hurdles and other woodland products: **EXMOOR BASKETS AND HURDLES** ☎ 01398 323391 [www.greencountry.co.uk](http://www.greencountry.co.uk)  
**THE ENGLISH BASKET & HURDLE CENTRE** ☎ 01823 698418 [www.hurdle.co.uk](http://www.hurdle.co.uk), or for more local suppliers look under **BASKETMAKERS** in the online Yellow Pages ([yell.com](http://yell.com)) or visit **WWW.ALLOTMENTFORESTRY.COM**