Do you think herbs are mysterious and hard to grow? Central Texas with its dry, hot summers and alkaline soil can be the perfect place to grow many herbs. Some herbs will grow in sun or shade, but angelica, cardamom, chervil, ginger, and ginseng prefer shade. Full sun, rocky conditions with poor soil are preferred by herbs like rosemary, oregano, lavender, thyme, basil, dill, fennel, marjoram, sage, and santolina. All herbs require well-drained soil. If you live east of I35 and have the heavy Blackland soil, you will want to grow herbs in raised beds and amend your soil with expanded shale or decomposed granite.

Evergreen shrubby herbs like rosemary, lavender, santolina, and mahonia are also useful in landscaping as specimen plants or hedges. Although not evergreen, roses can also be used as hedges or specimen plantings and offer their petals for potpourri, and their rose hips for jelly, relish, and sauces. Herbs benefit from regular pruning and now that you have a fragrant garden filled with herbs, how will you use your clippings? Add herbs when grilling, roasting, making soups, desserts, or brewing tea. Also, potpourri, flower arrangements, fabric dyes, insect repellents, crafts, soaps, oils, and lotions will benefit from the use of herbs.

To learn the basics of herb horticulture, plan to attend the “Growing and Cooking with Herbs” seminar at the Texas AgriLife Extension building, 1605 North Main in Belton on March 24th at 7:00 PM. The Herb Study Group is presenting this seminar and will highlight 21 herbs that do well in Central Texas. The master gardener plant sale on Saturday, March 26 will include a wide variety of herbs. The sale starts at 7:30 AM and will offer hard to find herbs like stevia, lemon grass, Mexican Mint Marigold, and Mexican Oregano, and includes scented geranium. See you at the seminar and plant sale!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: If you can grow weeds, you can grow herbs. Many herbs like this Spanish Lavender, prefer to grow in rocky, poor, alkaline soil. The soil must be well-drained, so amend it with expanded shale or decomposed granite.