Herbal Tea

Ann Geyer, Lincoln County Master Gardener

There are quite a few herbs and flowers that are suitable for making herbal teas.

* [*Peppermint*](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Peppermint-Tea) - this is a perennial favorite for many people. Its refreshing taste is uplifting and cleansing, as well as wonderful for stomach troubles of all kinds. Peppermint is generally very easy to grow and enjoys sunny and semi-shaded spots. Grows very, very easily and unless you want it escaping across the garden, keep it pot-bound. The leaves are the part used for making tea.
* [*Lavender*](http://www.wikihow.com/Dry-Lavender) - a delightful, softly fragrant tisane that is perfect for soothing, especially recommended for [reducing tension](http://www.wikihow.com/Remove-All-Tension-from-Your-Body) and [soothing headaches](http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-a-Headache). Lavender grows well in full sun, well-drained soil. Lavender buds are the part of the plant used for tea.
* *Lemon Verbena* - a refreshing and tangy lemony taste comes packed in these simple but easy-to-grow leaves. It needs full sun and will not tolerate harsh winters, so keep it pot-bound if that's a danger in your area. The leaves are the part used for tea.
* [*Chamomile*](http://www.wikihow.com/Condition-Your-Hair-with-Beer-and-Chamomile)*(German)* - A delightful [apple](http://www.wikihow.com/Eat-an-Apple) scented herb, this one is traditionally used to induce calm and sleep. It makes a gorgeous but delicate lawn feature with small daisy-like flowers. It tolerates full sun to semi-shade. The flowers are the preferred part for making the [tea](http://www.wikihow.com/Serve-Low-Tea).
* *Stevia* - Stevia is a safe and natural herbal sweetener, used in place of sugar in an herbal infusion and safe for diabetics to use. Stevia does not handle colder weather well at all and should therefore be a potted herb that is brought indoors during cold snaps and wintertime. The leaves are naturally sweet and their sweetness can be concentrated by drying or dehydrating them
* [*Rosemary*](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Rosemary-Castile-Shampoo) - Rosemary has long been used in infusions for easing emotional depression and blood circulation issues. This plant prefers strong full sun but will tolerate light shade, and requires well-drained soil.
* *Thyme* - thyme is considered to be a good tea for soothing [stomach troubles](http://www.wikihow.com/Cure-a-Stomach-Ache) and sore throats. It is spicy and may be an acquired taste - try it first before cutting too much herb! It is tolerant of full sun and semi-shade and is an ideal container herb. Use the leaves for tea - if flowers are present, these can also be added.
* [*Violets*](http://www.wikihow.com/Grow-African-Violets) - if you love the smell of violets, [violet tea](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Violet-Tea) will probably be a favorite with you. Violets prefer shady growing areas and are easy potted plants if desired. An excellent source of vitamins A and C. Violets are considered to be soothing and refreshing and are a good tonic after winter. The dried leaves and [flowers](http://www.wikihow.com/Dry-Flowers) are suitable for steeping (fresh flowers can be used for effect - see photo).
* *Jasmine* - with a fragrance reminiscent of summer time, jasmine provides a delicate and enticing flavor. It grows in full sun to semi-shade and although it can form a part of your tea garden, it needs a [trellis](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Reusable-Plant-Trellis) or wall at the back of the garden to really thrive. It is not suitable for cold winter climates, however, so if you endure that sort of weather, you will need a potting arrangement that can be moved indoors. The flowers are the suitable part for making tea.
* *Coriander* (aka cilantro) - used more frequently in [cooking](http://www.wikihow.com/Cook), coriander is also suitable for herbal tea and has a flavor similar to Lady Grey tea. With strong [citrus](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Citrus-Spray" \o "Make Citrus Spray)undertones, this tea carries a spicy and acidic flavor. Accepts full sun to semi-shade and is an ideal container herb. The leaves are used for tea.
* *Rose Hips* - rose hips are the seed cases for roses. They are extremely high in [vitamin C](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Vitamin-C-Indicator) and are very good for you. Rose hips will form once the rose bush goes to seed. The rose hips should be deep orange-red before harvesting. Clean the rose hips gently before steeping.
* *Bergamot* - Bergamot carries a touch of [orange](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Orange-Julius) flavor. The plant produces gorgeous bright red, violet or pink flowers and is happy in full sun or semi-shade. The leaves and flowers are suitable for steeping.
* *Marjoram* - this herb has a fruity, citrus flavor and an undertone of mint. It grows well in full sun to semi-shade. Leaves and [flowers](http://www.wikihow.com/Plant-Flowers) are suitable for steeping.

**Brewing**

To avoid ending up with faintly flavored water, you need to keep a few rules in mind.

1. To make stronger tea, use more tea rather than steep for a longer period. A good rule is to steep tea in hot water for no more than 2 minutes.
2. Never boil the tea. Boiling will cause the essential oil that forms the tea flavor to evaporate.
3. Use a covered container to brew the tea. Open containers allow the essential oils to escape into the air rather than into the tea.
4. Iced tea is made by cooling hot steeped tea in the refrigerator.
5. Don’t let the tea stand for more than a day or two. Some teas release tannic acid which can change the flavor and be hard on delicate stomachs.
6. Sun tea. There seems to be a changing attitude about whether sun tea should be brewed warm or cold. Warm sun tea is made by putting tea in a covered glass jar and leaving it in the sun for 3-6 hours. Cool tea is made the same way except the jar is placed in the refrigerator. Start tasting after 2 hours. Discard the leaves once it has finished brewing.

Some Recipes

**Berry-Mint Lemonade  (serves 6)**

1. Berry base

1 pint berries of your choice (fresh or frozen)

3/4 c + 2tbsp fresh lemon tea made from any lemon flavored herb (or mix several types together). Bunches of mint

1. Syrup

Mix the sugar, mink and 2 3/4 c of water.  Bring to boil and then heat until the sugar fully dissolves.  Let stand 30 mins.  Sieve and discard the mint.  Can be refrigerated in airtight container for up to 2 months.  Makes 3 cups of syrup.

3. Lemonade

Put the berries and lemon juice or tea in food processor and puree

Sieve and discard pulp.  I didn't do this step as you loose a lot of the puree.

Put into pitcher--Add in 1 1/2 cups of the mint syrup and 2 cups cold water

Fill with ice

Garnish with berries, lemon slices, and mint springs.

**Herbal Tea Cider**

1. Ginger Base  
4-6 Tbsp freshly grated ginger root and 2 cups cold water

Add ginger to water, cover tightly and bring to boil.  Remove from heat and let steep 10-15 mins.  Keep cover on.

2.  Make lemonade or lemon favored tea to taste.  You can use any lemon favored herb and/or add some mint as well.

3.  Mix equal portions of the lemonade or tea with the ginger base ( adjust to your taste).

4.  Adjust sweetness with heated honey to make it easier to dissolve.  Add a cinnamon stick and steep for 5 minutes (optional).

5.  Refrigerate.

6.  To serve, you can add sparkling water. The sparkling water make the cider more like a soda.