HERBS · A SUNNY PATIO OR BALCONY WITH GOOD DRAINAGE

Let's grow thyme.

Thymus vulgaris

This plan is for **Common or German thyme**

Tiny fragrant leaves from one small, sunny pot.

2-gallon pot **1 nursery plant**

Before you start

Set a tender new nursery plant outdoors after frost danger; use a sunny, well-drained pot and plan winter protection locally.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 23, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Lots of sun

Give it at least 6 hours outdoors; afternoon relief helps in intense heat.

WATER

Let the top inch dry

Established thyme dislikes constantly wet roots.

FEEDING

Only a little, if needed

Healthy growth in fresh enriched mix needs no extra feed.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One draining 2-gallon pot, at least 10 inches wide and 8 inches deep
- ✓ 1 healthy culinary thyme nursery plant
- ✓ Fresh potting mix, a watering can, and scissors

THE SOIL

Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US, feeds for up to 2 months)

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A sunny patio or balcony with good drainage. Start with **nursery plant**.

THE POT

2-gallon pot

At least 10 inches wide and 8 inches deep, with drainage.

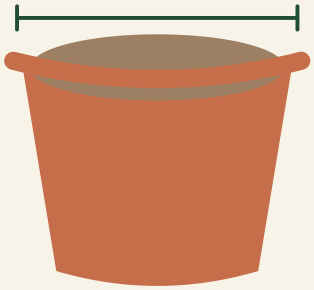
HOW MANY

1 nursery plant

Buy culinary common or German thyme, labeled Thymus vulgaris.

THE CONTAINER

2-gallon pot



Drainage holes

START WITH

1 nursery plant



Illustration · not to scale

2-gallon pot · 1 nursery plant At least 10 inches wide and 8 inches deep, with drainage. Buy culinary common or German thyme, labeled Thymus vulgaris. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Choose a cooking thyme

Look for Thymus vulgaris on the label. A rooted nursery plant is the quickest route to a few kitchen sprigs.

02

Plant at the same level

Dampen the mix and set the root-ball surface level with it. Keep the woody stem base uncovered and water the plant in.

03

Let the surface dry a little

Place the pot in sun. Check before watering again; do not leave the pot sitting in a full saucer.

04

Take soft leafy tips

After new growth begins, snip a few tender tips above leafy growth. Leave most of the plant and avoid cutting back into bare wood.

Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Start slowly from seed

Sow 6 seeds across a small 3-inch starter pot. Press gently and cover only with a very light dusting of mix, no more than 1⁄16 inch. Keep the surface damp in good light. At four true leaves, keep the strongest seedling and snip extras; move it up as its roots fill the pot. Seed-grown thyme takes longer than a nursery plant.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Keep seed pots moist. For established plants, water when the top inch is dry and the pot feels lighter; drain.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1½ teaspoons in 1 US gallon of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

One conditional feeding; reassess in 4–6 weeks.

WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

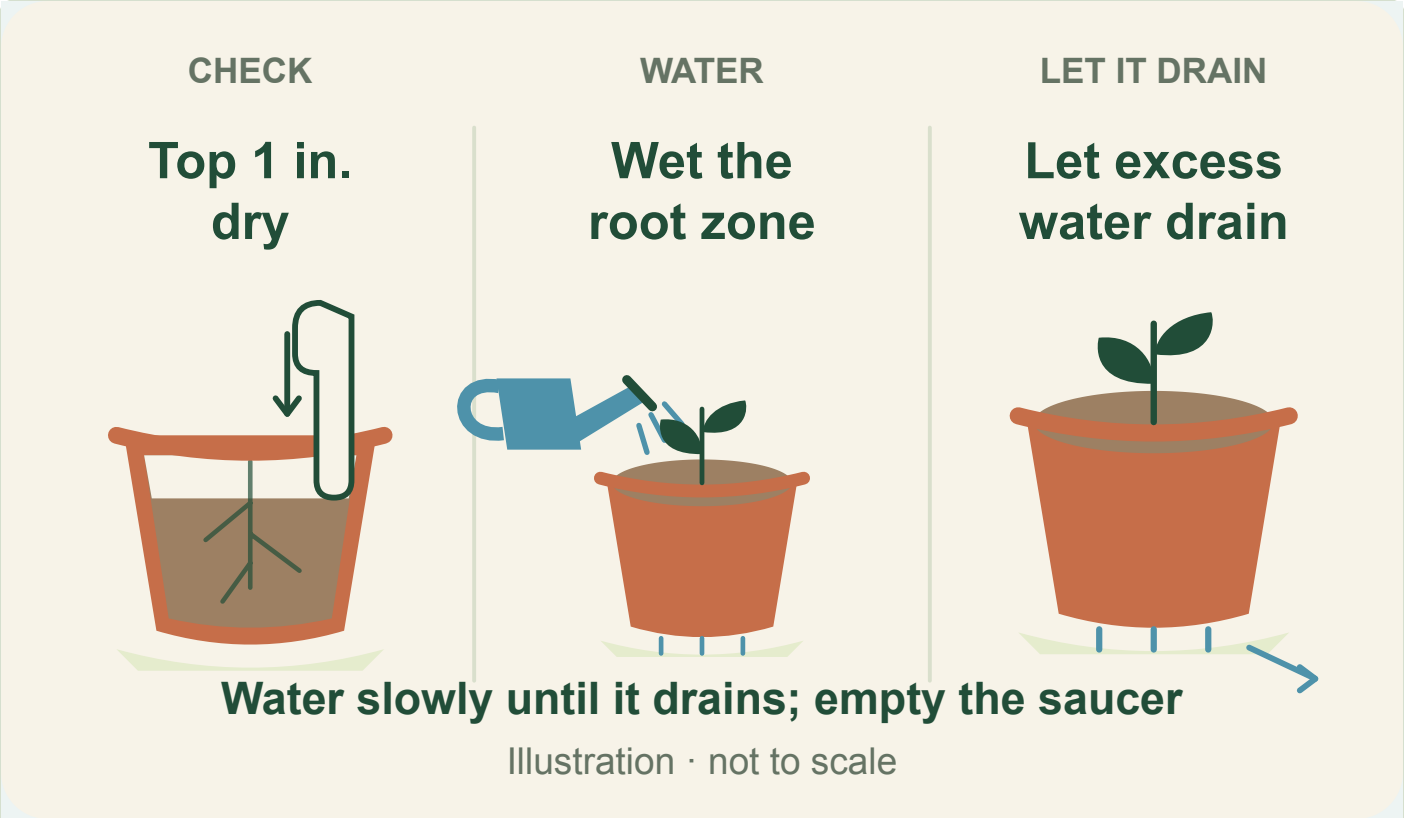
After starter feed ends, feed only if growth stays weak after checking light and watering.

Half the product's outdoor concentration; no automatic recurring feed.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check daily outdoors at first. For an established plant, wait until the top inch is dry and the pot feels lighter, then water thoroughly and let excess drain. A seed pot needs a moist surface instead. Do not turn drought tolerance into weeks of neglect in a small hot container.



Check before watering. Keep seed pots moist. For established plants, water when the top inch is dry and the pot feels lighter; drain. Original illustration; not to scale.

> **The easy rule**
>
> Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

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02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Start with no extra fertilizer while fresh enriched mix supports healthy growth. Thyme is a light feeder; pale leaves in soggy mix are a reason to check the roots, not immediately add plant food.



1½ teaspoons in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. One conditional feeding; reassess in 4–6 weeks. After starter feed ends, feed only if growth stays weak after checking light and watering. Original illustration; not to scale.



US PRODUCT REFERENCE

Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

A CONDITIONAL TOP-UP, NOT A WEEKLY ROUTINE

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

After the bag's starter feed ends, if growth remains weak after checking light and watering, mix 1½ teaspoons of the US 24-8-16 product per gallon of water. Apply once at the roots and reassess in 4–6 weeks. This uses Minnesota's half-strength outdoor herb dilution with a conservative schedule for a light feeder. Use only enough to wet the pot and drain.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

Use the named US formulation. A different product or concentration needs different directions. The amount mixed is a batch, not a dose to pour into one pot.

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03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

New growth and your first snips

An established nursery plant can supply small snips after fresh growth appears. Seeds often take 14–21 days to germinate in suitable warmth, followed by a slow start. Keep early harvests small.

Outdoor planting and winter limits

Set a tender new nursery plant outdoors after frost danger. Winter survival varies with cultivar, climate, and how exposed the pot is; a container is less protected than garden soil.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

Something looking off?

Why is it yellow and wilting in wet mix?

Check drainage and empty the saucer. Roots can suffer when they stay wet. Wait before watering again and do not use fertilizer as the first fix.

Can I cut the bare woody center right back?

For routine harvests, cut above healthy leafy growth. An exhausted woody plant may be easier to replace than to restore by cutting into leafless stems.

Why are the stems thin and stretched?

Check whether it is getting enough direct light. A bright-looking kitchen counter may still be too dim for compact growth.

Choosing cooking thyme and harvesting

Choose common thyme for cooking

This is a cooking-herb plan for Thymus vulgaris. Creeping ornamental thymes and lemon-scented types have different habits or flavors; read the label before buying.

Take small sprigs and leave growing foliage

Take a small sprig, then strip the leaves from tougher stems for cooking. Leave enough foliage to support the next flush of growth.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- University of Minnesota: light feeding and dry-loving herbs ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/growing-herbs
- Iowa State: growing herbs in containers ↗
  https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/growing-herbs-containers
- Johnny's Selected Seeds: German Winter thyme seed starting ↗
  https://www.johnnyseeds.com/herbs/thyme/german-winter-organic-thyme-seed-940G.25.html
- Bonnie Plants: thyme planting, harvest, and common problems ↗
  https://bonnieplants.com/blogs/how-to-grow/growing-thyme
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

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Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.