

Grow your own Basil

BAAH-SIL OR BAY-ZIL

How do you say the name?

The soft "ah" is English and the hard "A" is American. The word basil comes from the Greek (basileus soft AH Sound), meaning "king", as it is believed to have grown above the spot where St. Constantine and Helen discovered the Holy Cross.

Plant Type: Annual

Scientific Name: *Ocimum basilicum*

Mature Plant Size: 45cm high x 30cm wide

Light: Full Sun

Flowering Period: July to August

Soil Type: rich, moist, well-drained soil

pH Range: 6.0

Known Pests: Aphids, cutworms

Growing Basil is relatively easy as long as the growing environments has suitable light and temperature levels. Basil is grown for its fragrant tasty leaves that can be added raw to salads, sandwiches or used in cooked dishes such as the ever popular pasta with tomato and basil sauce.

PREPARATION

If growing Basil in pots then ensure that adequate drainage is allowed from the base of the pot (line with coarse gravel if necessary). If growing outside then ensure the soil is well dug over and weed free before sowing or transplanting. Before sowing ensure that the compost or soil is moist (water generously the day before sowing).

Basil should be grown in a position that receives a good amount of sunlight - around 6-8 hours a day. Basil can be grown indoors on a sunny windowsill or outdoors in containers or soil. If growing outside try and position the Basil in a sheltered spot that avoids cold winds.

SOIL TYPE

Basil likes a fertile soil that has been well dug to allow good soil air circulation. Introducing well rotted organic compost or manure into the soil a month or so before sowing will help this. If growing in pots then a general purpose compost is a suitable soil solution.

If growing indoors in pots using compost then weeds shouldn't be a problem. If growing outdoors then you can add an organic mulch around the Basil plants to help aid soil moisture retention and prevent weed establishment.

If growing Basil in containers or indoor pots then add a small amount of fertilizer every month or so. Water every week (more often if growing in outdoor containers). When watering your Basil make sure to water at the base of the plant avoiding showering the leaves and stems.

Be sure to pinch out any flowers that appear. This will help preserve the plants flavour and also channel the plants energies into more leaf growth.

HARVESTING

Basil is a pick and come again crop. It is best to pick a few leaves off a number of plants than picking all the leaves off one plant. Harvest the top most leaves first. Basil will grow all year round indoors but outdoor plants should be dug up and brought indoors before the first fall frosts if you want to extend the plants growing season into the winter. Once harvested Basil can be frozen for later use.

Basil can be used in fresh or dried form. To dry Basil cut the stems at soil level and dry them in a dehydrator or hang bunches of stems up to air dry in a warm room, this should take about a week. Once the leaves are dried you can remove them from the stems and then store them in a dry airtight container for up to 12 months.



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Popular Basil Cultivars

Common name	Species and cultivars	Description
Sweet basil	<i>O. basilicum</i>	The best known, with a strong clove scent when fresh
Thai basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> var. <i>thrysiflorum</i> 'Siam Queen'	scent of licorice.
Genovese basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Genovese Gigante'	Almost as popular as sweet basil, with similar taste
Cinnamon basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Cinnamon'	Also called Mexican spice basil, with a strong smell of cinnamon.
Spicy globe basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Spicy Globe'	Grows in a bush form, very small leaves.
Purple ruffles basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Purple Ruffles'	Solid purple, rich and spicy and an aniselike flavor
Fino verde basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Piccolo'	Small, narrow leaves, sweeter, less pungent smell
Nufar basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Nufar F1'	A cultivar of Genovese resistant to wilt.
Lettuce leaf basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Lettuce Leaf'	Has leaves so large they are some times used in salad
Red rubin basil	<i>O. basilicum</i> 'Red Rubin'	Strong magenta color, similar flavor to sweet Basil

