

# Basil

## *Ocimum basilicum*

Basil is easy to grow and, once you become accustomed to using it, utterly indispensable. Use leaves to flavor sauces, soups, pastas, and poultry. Transform the rest into pesto and freeze it for winter use. The only trick to a continuous supply is continuous harvesting.

**TIP** – Basil grows beautifully in a container. Space 3 plants 6 inches apart in the center of a large pot, add a slow-release fertilizer to the soil mix, and water regularly for a guaranteed harvest.

**Location and soil** Basil makes an excellent companion to tomato plants, and can also be incorporated into flower beds. It grows well in full sun or part shade. Soil should be well drained and high in organic matter.

**When to Plant** Sow seed indoors 4-6 weeks prior to the planting date in your area, providing bottom heat to speed germination. Transplant seedlings to larger pots (one to a pot) as necessary to keep them healthy. Wait to set transplants out until the soil has warmed to at least 65°F. In many regions, a second round planted in mid-summer will yield a fall crop.

**Germination** Basil seedlings will sprout in 1-2 weeks. Best germination occurs when soil temperature is between 65° and 85°F.






**Plant Spacing** Space young plants about 12 inches apart.

**Garden Care** Water basil plants regularly, and mulch to control weeds and conserve soil moisture. Harvest branch ends about every 2 weeks to promote bushy new growth, and pinch off any flowers that appear to encourage leaf over seed production. If plants get overly large and lanky they can be cut back by half, and doused with a dilute liquid fertilizer, such as fish emulsion, to promote regrowth.

**Fertilize** Mix compost into the soil at the time of planting, and side-dress plants with a slow-release balanced fertilizer. Repeat later in the season, if you notice that new leaves are a paler shade of green.

**Harvest** As with most herbs, the more you cut, the more you'll get. Begin pinching basil plants when they have 4-6 sets of leaves, and continue harvesting branch tips until frost.

**Nutrition** Basil is a source of Vitamins A, C, and K.

	<b>Cinnamon</b>	<b>Sweet Italian</b>	<b>Genovese</b>	<b>Lemon</b>	<b>Siam Queen AAS Winner, 1997</b>
					
<b>Plant Description</b>	2-3 ft plants have attractive dark green serrated leaves, purple stalks, and pink flowers.	Plants grow 3 ft tall and 2 ft wide. Large green tender leaves.	Plants grow 3 ft tall and 2 ft wide. Large green tender leaves.	Plants grow to 3 ft; leaves are similar to Italian basil but lighter in color and narrower.	2-ft plants have medium green leaves, purple stems, violet flowers.
<b>Flavor</b>	Mild peppery cinnamon flavor.	Classic basil taste.	Classic basil taste; peppery, spicy.	Lemon essence.	Spicy licorice-basil flavor.
<b>Comments</b>	Attractive in containers.	Very productive.	Considered by many the best culinary basil.	Versatile for culinary uses.	Good bolt resistance; very ornamental.
<b>Uses</b>	Garnish, fruit salads, Asian dishes.	Pesto, Italian dishes, poultry, fish.	Pesto, Italian dishes, poultry, fish.	Salads, curries, stews, lamb, poultry, fish.	Soups, stir-fries, Thai dishes.