



How to Grow Basil

Basil is a delicious, versatile and easy to grow herb. It is commonly used in Italian and Asian recipes, and the variety 'Siam Queen' is spicy Thai basil with an intense flavor and fragrance. Between it's easy to grow and variety of uses, this is an herb you'll always want to have on hand.

Basil Prefers:

Light: full sun

Soil: well-drained, high in organic matter

Fertility: prefers a medium-high soil fertility

pH of: 6.4

Temperature: no less than 60 degrees

Moisture: requires regular moisture

Fertilizer: benefits from regular fertilization

Yields: a single plant can yield 12 or more cups of leaves

To start basil from seed, wait until the last danger of frost (it needs warm nights). You can also start your basil from seed indoors 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost date. Plant outside in full sun and keep well watered. If they get too chilled, they will turn black and die. As the basil grows, pinch off any flower buds to keep the plant's energy producing leaves and to keep the plants bushy.

When you are ready to harvest, cut whole stems above a pair of lower leaves. Many recipes use fresh basil, but you can also dry it by hanging it upside-down by the stems. Keep it out of direct sunlight. Remove dried leaves from stems and store in an airtight container. The dried leaves can then be crushed and used in sauces.

Want to try a truly delicious summertime treat? Try combining basil, garlic, olive oil and balsamic vinegar in a food processor. Spread it on crusty bread, and sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Try adding summer tomatoes to the snack, as they will compliment the basil.

Freezing whole basil leaves by placing them in ice cube trays with water is a wonderful way to keep basil fresh.

Basil is often planted between tomatoes and pepper. This not only saves garden space, but the basil also acts as a repellent to some insects and can help prevent diseases. The leaves will also repel fruit flies!

