

Spring

Plant Now

# Basil

Planting information by garden writer  
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Basil is used in everyday cooking, sprinkled on a salad, bruschetta, perfect raw with tomatoes, and the main component of pesto. Growing it at home means you'll never be in short supply. Basil is a famous companion to tomatoes in the garden and in the kitchen.

Basil is an annual herb that is easy to grow in a pot or garden and comes in many flavours for different styles of cooking. Sweet basil has the best basil flavour but Greek basil has is milder but looks gorgeous in the garden. Purple leafed basil is best raw in salads for flavour and colour. Lemon Basil is good for teas and salad dressings while Thai basil is essential of Thai dishes – don't confuse it with sweet basil as it does has a distinctive aniseed flavour closer to dill than to sweet basil and is not at all good for Italian pesto.

## Growing instructions



Once you know which basil is for which dish, the actual growing of basil is largely the same for all varieties. They like it hot, humid and moist so give plants lots of sunshine, regular watering and liquid feeding. You will start to harvest basil six weeks after planting. They grow plentifully throughout the spring, summer and into autumn and if you keep your plants in a warm position

you will continue harvesting leaves into early winter. Winter cold will make basil leaves black so remember to pick the lot for pesto before the cold weather strikes.

## In the kitchen

Basil can be picked with long stems and placed in a glass half filled with water for days on the windowsill and used when needed or can be wrapped in moist kitchen paper and placed in the crisper.

## Basil tips

- Basil can be grown from seed or bought as seedlings from your garden retailer.
- Sow or plant successionally every 4 weeks to ensure near year round production.
- Windowsill grown pots of basil can be trimmed daily but a pot outside will grow larger.
- Tip prune basil when young to get thicker growth.
- Water basil in the early mornings rather than late at night to prevent damping off.
- Harvest by removing individual leaves, growing tips or little stems – don't cut the plant to the ground and think it will regrow.
- Pluck flowers off as they coarsen the leaves and shorten the plants life span.