



Basil Planting Guide

About Basil

Many herb-loving gardeners grow basil in vegetable beds and in pots around the kitchen door, where they are easy to pinch for cooking and hard to forget to water.

When to Plant

Basil is a tender annual that cannot survive through frost. Plant your basil seeds outdoors directly into your garden after all danger of frost has passed. Or, if you want a head start, plant basil seeds indoors as early as 6 weeks before the last frost and then plant out after you've hardened off your seedlings and the weather has warmed.

Where to Plant

Choose a location that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day and preferably in an area sheltered against cold winds. Basil thrives best in rather poor, gravelly, and well-drained soil. When grown in rich garden beds, they make more luxuriant vegetative growth but lose much of their fragrance and flavor. Keep in mind that basil leaves can be used in your daily culinary endeavors, so keep your plantings in reach or at least in a garden close to your kitchen.

How to Plant

Till the area or rake to loosen the soil and amend with either organic compost or well-rotted manure to add good drainage to the soil. Sow basil seed 1/4" deep; thin successful plants to 8" apart or more depending on the variety. Space rows 18-24" apart. Keep your basil soil moist for quick growth, but do not overwater. It is best to mulch around the base of the plant to aide in moisture retention and to deter weeds.

Caring for Basil

Keep your basil plants around the kitchen door where they are easy to pinch for cooking and adding to salads. With herbs, especially basil, using them regularly is a form of maintenance – the more you pinch, the more they grow. The most favorable time for cutting is early in the morning after the dew has dried and before the plants have been touched with hot midday sun. Cut just as the flowers are about to open, it is at this stage that the essential oils are the most abundant.

Since Basil will be killed by any touch of frost, gardeners can prolong its life-span by transplanting basil plants into containers and moving them into a warm, sunny location indoor. Basil will do best near a south-facing window. If you live in USDA Zone 9 or above you can keep your basil growing outdoors year-round.