

BASIL

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), known for its pungent fragrance and sharp taste, provides an interesting contrast in salads, sauces, pasta dishes, soups, stews and with fish. Basil is a great addition to any aquaponic garden because of its vibrant color and rapid growth. Commercially, basil has excellent potential because of the high demand and high price it brings.



Basil is an annual herb but if weekly cuttings are taken (beginning before the plant flowers) you can harvest fresh basil for months. There are many varieties available. Some of the most popular include:

Italian Large Leaf basil (also known as Sweet basil) is the plant we commonly call basil and often see sold fresh in grocery stores. It has dark green leaves, white flowers and a mild flavor with a hint of cloves. *Genovese basil*, with large dark green leaves about 2 inches long, is the original pesto basil.

Thai (or anise) basil, with its purplish-green leaves and stems and purple flowers, is a must for Asian cooking.

Cinnamon basil has deep green leaves, lavender flowers and a subtle cinnamon flavor.

Lemon basil is an ideal companion to fish and pastas dishes and makes an excellent flavoring for gourmet vinegar or oil.

Purple Passion basil is an ornamental but very fragrant plant. It has deep purple leaves and stalks.

Purple Ruffles basil has shiny, maroon, ruffled leaves that make an excellent garnish or addition to herbed vinegar.

Growing Conditions:

Basil can survive in a wide range of temperatures but does best between 68° – 75° F (20°-24° C). Basil likes good light but may need to be shaded on long, hot summer days. Basil needs good ventilation and frequent air exchange.

Plant Support:

If you are growing a larger variety of basil (such as Italian Large Leaf) you may need to tie the plants to a trellis or support them with strings and plant clips to keep them from toppling over.

Seed Propagation:

Basil seeds germinate in 4 - 7 days at a temperature of 70° F (21° C). Once the seedlings are about 2 weeks old, they should be transplanted into the grow bed, spaced 8 inches apart.

Harvesting:

Snip basil leaflets at the base of the leaf axis. For a prolonged harvest, begin taking cuttings before the first flower buds form and continue every week until the plant weakens or plant growth slows dramatically.