

# Basil Basics

Basil is the most popular annual herb we grow - and deserves to be even more popular. Delicious fresh, easy to dry, divine in pesto - we've even seen recipes for alcoholic drinks that use basil! With literally dozens of varieties to choose from and very simple growing needs, basil belongs in every herb garden. No room for an herb garden? It's great in pots on the patio, too.

## Some growing tips:

- Don't put basil outside until the soil has warmed - we've killed LOTS of plants by thinking they'd be OK outside just because the temps were above freezing; however, they need 50 - 60 degree temps and warm soil to thrive.
- Basil loves sunshine and warm temperatures. However, we've had pretty good yields with as little as 6 hours of sun a day.
- Add a little compost to the ground before planting basil. That should be all the fertilizer they need.
- Water your basil patch if it starts to wilt; basil doesn't need too much water, so let the plants tell you what they need. Note: Basil planted in containers will need more frequent watering than basil planted in the ground.

Interesting fact: basil blooms when it grows a certain number of leaves (generally between 6 and 10 sets, depending on the variety), so if it starts to go to seed, don't just cut the flowers off - cut the plant itself back.

## Using Basil

- Use it fresh! Chop it up with kitchen shears and use it in salads, vegetable dishes, eggs, chicken or tuna salad...and of course, anyplace you use tomatoes. Stuff several sprigs into the body cavity of a roasting chicken and cook it slowly.
- [Pesto](#) of course. Fast and simple to make.
- Put it in the blender with olive oil and whirr it up. Freeze the resulting mixture in ice cube trays. Then, this winter, thaw a cube and use it to saute meats or vegetables. You'll swear it's July again!
- [Dry it](#). Basil is among the easiest herbs to dry and after using home-dried basil, you'll realize just how tasteless the stuff from the grocery store is!

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