

## Basil Basics

- A tender annual. Completes its lifecycle in 1 year or 1 growing cycle. Frost sensitive.
- Full sun.
- Rich, well-drained soil. Dig in plenty of compost before you plant.
- Water regularly. Basil is not drought tolerant and can be damaged by heat stress.
- Grows well in containers, but check every day during dry, hot weather.

## Harvest:

- Begin harvesting once plant is established. Harvest early in the day when the temperature is cooler and the leaves are less likely to wilt.
- The best leaves are from younger stems that have not yet flowered.
- To extend harvest, keep flower buds pinched off. Snip stems just above 2 new sprouting lateral branches.
- Full harvest should be done just before plant starts to flower. Cut entire plant 4” – 6” above ground to promote a second growth. Leaves are easily bruised when picking so handle carefully.

## Basil Varieties:

Sweet basil is popular in Italian cooking. Green foliage. Chiffonade young leaves to sprinkle on soups, salads, pasta, tomato sauce and pizza just before serving. Use fresh, whole leaves in Caprese salad. Use older leaves for pesto and vinegar. Examples: Genovese, Napolitano, Profumo di Genova and Italian Pesto.

Thai basil, lemon basil and holy basil play a major role in South East Asian cuisines. Fresh basil is always added to pho, a popular Vietnamese noodle soup. Use in Asian dishes and stir fries. Example: Thai Queenette.

Dwarf green basils grow well in containers due to their compact shape. Perfect for edging borders or for windowsills. Use as you would sweet green basil. Examples: Italian Cameo, Minimum and Windowbox.

Red and purple leaved basils can be stunning in herb and ornamental gardens. Use leaves and edible flowers from Purple Ruffles in salads and for garnishes. Add to vinegars and oils. African Blue Basil does not produce seed, but acts as a “bee hotel.” Use in cut flower bouquets. Examples: Purple Ruffles and Cardinal.

A scented-leaf basil like Mrs. Burns’ Lemon is excellent for salad dressings, vinegar and fish dishes. Use fresh leaves in salads.