

Basil is a an annual herb belonging to the mint family. There are over 60 cultivated varieties of the most popular species, *Ocimum basilicum*, or Sweet Basil. The name *ocimum* comes from a Greek verb meaning “to be fragrant”. Simply brushing against the plant releases a wonderful aroma. Basils’ rich, slightly peppery flavor with hints of clove and mint make it a popular culinary herb. The essential oils of basil are used for flavoring and for perfumes, soaps and shampoos. Some varieties even do double-duty as beautiful ornamental plants.

Name	Size	Description and Use
<b>African Blue</b>	36”	A gorgeous large decorative basil with foliage that emerges purple, then changes to green with purple veins. Pinkish purple flower spikes. Very high in camphor oil. <b>Not recommended for culinary use.</b>
<b>Genovese</b>	24”	Large leaves with classic sweet basil flavor make this type the cook’s favorite for pesto, caprese and Italian dishes.
<b>Greek Columnar</b>	24”	This narrow, small-leaved variety is great in pots or where space is limited. Rarely flowers, so fresh tasty leaves are produced all season. The flavor is classic basil with spicy overtones.
<b>Mammoth</b>	24”	Very large, ruffled leaves are excellent for wrapping chopped beef and vegetables. The flavor is strong and sweet.
<b>Minette</b>	10”	Dainty dwarf variety grows in a perfect globe shape. Tiny leaves with classic basil flavor are great in tomato dishes, salads and soup.
<b>Pesto Perpetuo</b>	18”	Compact, variegated form with pretty pale green and white leaves. Does not flower, so fresh leaves are produced all season. Beautiful as an accent. Perfect in pesto!
<b>Purple Ruffles</b>	18”	Large, frilly leaves are a striking deep purple color with a fragrance and flavor a bit stronger than Sweet basil. Great for adding color and flavor to herb vinegar.
<b>Red Rubin</b>	18”	Purple foliage holds its color all season. Sweet, clove-like basil flavor. Compact form. A beautiful ornamental plant. Great in herb vinegar.
<b>Siam Queen</b>	24”	Disease resistant variety with licorice fragrance and flavor. Purple flower spikes. Great in Asian cooking.
<b>Spicy Globe</b>	12”	Small, neatly rounded plant with small leaves and a sweet, spicy flavor. Makes a delightful edging plant.
<b>Sweet Dani</b>	24”	From a research project at Purdue University. Large leaves with intense lemon flavor. Steep leaves in hot water for a tea, sprinkle on salads or use in chicken and fish dishes.
<b>Sweet</b>	24”	Most common basil. Large leaves with classic basil flavor. Good in pesto, salads and for general seasoning.

## **Planting**

Basil is a heat-loving annual with roots in tropical India and Asia. Plant outside after May 15 when nighttime temperatures are reliably above 55° F.

- Choose a site with full sun, meaning at least 6 hours of direct sun per day.
- Soil should be well-drained and enriched with coarse organic matter.
- A light layer of organic mulch helps to moderate soil temperature and moisture, and to deter weeds.
- Basil also performs very well in pots. Use a good quality potting mix.

## **Harvesting & Care**

- The more you harvest, the better. Frequent pinching keeps basil productive. Leaves are tastiest just as the plant begins to set flower buds at the branch tips, but well before flowers bloom.
- Pinch or snip leaves at this time and remove all flower buds to keep the plant productive. Pinch ¼" above a leaf node.
- Remove any stems that have flowered, as they will no longer produce leaves.
- Overgrown plants can be cut back to 6-8 inches. Leave at least two shoots with one leaf node for the plant to regenerate. A new, smaller crop of leaves should be ready to harvest 3-4 weeks later.
- Water deeply when soil is dry. Basil prefers to be on the dry side.
- Be prepared to protect plants with light fabric if temperatures are predicted to dip below 45° F.

## **Storage**

- Keep fresh basil leaves in the refrigerator loosely wrapped in a slightly damp paper towel.
- Basil freezes well, chopped or whole. Store in an airtight container.
- Try freezing basil in ice cube trays covered with water or stock for use later in soups or stews.
- Put fresh leaves in vinegar or oil.
- Make pesto! Pesto freezes well for 6 months.