



# Kitchen Gardens



## PARSLEY FLAT LEAF ITALIAN

(PETROSELINUM CRISPUM)

### CARE AND GROWING YOUR PARSLEY

Growing parsley indoors on a sunny windowsill is ornamental as well as practical. Curly types have lacy, frilly foliage that looks great in any setting and flat-leaf varieties are prized for their flavor. Learning how to grow parsley indoors is not at all complicated and neither is indoor parsley care

Parsley herbs (*Petroselinum crispum*) grow best in a sunny, preferably south-facing window where they will receive six to eight hours of direct sunlight every day. If your window doesn't provide that much light, you will have to supplement it with fluorescent lighting. Turn the pot every three or four days so that the plant doesn't lean into the sun.

Parsley container gardening is no different than growing any other potted herbs. Choose a container that fits snugly on the window sill. It should have several drainage holes and a saucer underneath to catch water as it drains through. Fill the pot with a good quality potting soil and add a handful of clean sand to improve the drainage.

Humidity isn't usually a problem when you grow parsley in the kitchen where steam from cooking and the constant use of water helps keep the air moist. In other locations, you may need to mist the plants from time to time. If the leaves look dry and brittle, set the plant on top of a tray of pebbles and add water to the tray, leaving the tops of the pebbles exposed. As the water evaporates, it increases the humidity of the air around the plant.

Indoor parsley care is easy. Keep the soil lightly moist, and empty the saucer under the pot after every watering so that the roots don't sit in water.

Feed the plants every two weeks with fish emulsion or half-strength liquid fertilizer.

You can grow other herbs in the container with parsley, if desired. Herbs that combine well in a mixed container with parsley include chives, thyme, basil, oregano and mint. When planting thyme with parsley herbs, stick them around the edges of a container or hanging basket where it can tumble over the edges.

#### WATER TIPS:

**DO NOT USE TAP WATER!** Tap water contains unwanted chemicals that strip the soil of beneficial organisms, it also has a Alkaline PH of 7 or more which cuts off the ability of the plant to absorb soil nutrients. Most people that say they have a brown thumb and fail in their efforts to keep a kitchen herb garden usually have doomed their efforts with their tap water. Purchase bottled water that for the most part have an acid PH of 5 or 6 to keep your plants healthy and happy, or collect rain water for this purpose.

If you must use tap water fill a couple of gallon jugs drawn from your hot water tap (which has been boiled) and let it sit uncapped for 2 days before using it on your plants. It will be very helpful to purchase a bottle of lemon juice and add a half of cap full per gallon of water, This will bring the PH of the water down to the alkaline range of 5.5 to 6.5.

#### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

**Type:** Biennial (it grows the first season and blooms the second)

**Planting time:** Spring, fall

**Features:** Flat, green leaves are easy to chop

**Light:** Sun to part shade

**Soil:** Light, well drained

**Plant spacing:** 15 to 18 inches

**Plant size:** 1 foot tall

**Garden use:** Containers, flower and herb beds

**Culinary use:** Garnish, seasoning, salads, palate cleanser

#### Additional Characteristics

**Harvesting:** Pick leaves at any point in the growing season. Snip individual leaves, cutting stems back to the base of the plant.

## HOW TO CUT BACK YOUR PARSLEY PLANT

Cut back the outermost leaves when the plant reaches about 8 inches tall and the leaves develop three complete leaf segments. Cut the stems back to the ground because production is poor if you cut off the leaves but leave the stems. Leaves around the outside of the plant mature faster than the newer growth in the center of the plant. This will keep your parsley plants from growing too high. Periodically take the tops of the plant and cut about a 1/3-inch off. Do this when you notice the plant is exceeding an ideal height at any time during the growing season. This process will not damage or kill the parsley and will allow you to maintain a nice appearance in your kitchen herb garden while controlling overgrowth. This can also be done by simply plucking back the leaves.

**TIP:** Begin by cutting the leaf stalks on the outside of the plant close to the surface of the soil. As you continue to harvest, work inwards. Don't be afraid to harvest too much. Healthy parsley plants will always bounce back!" Pinching or cutting back parsley plants regularly encourages full, bushy plants. Trim a Parsley plant every two to three weeks and pinch off the flower buds as soon as you see them. Trust me, the plant loves this and it will only encourage more vigorous growth while providing you with plenty of fresh parsley leaves for all your culinary needs.



Cut Outer Leaves  
Close To Base Of Soil

### **Saving Your Fresh Cut Herbs For Future Use.**

Most Herbs are fairly easy to dry without the use of a dehydrator. You must be sure the herb is completely dry before placing in dehydrator or hanging up to dry or they will grow mold. However the low heat stove method usually ends up with cooked herbs which lose all their flavor, and the hanging up air dried method ends up with dust collecting on the leaves since it takes a couple of weeks to dry completely. I highly recommend freezing your culinary herbs for storage. This method insures your herbs will keep all of its original flavor and works in your culinary purpose very close to fresh picked herbs. Of course the look rather sad after freezing and will not work as a garnish.

#### **How To Prepare Herbs For Freezing**

##### ***Freezing Leaves Whole***

First Strip the leaves off the stem. In order to preserve its color, you can blanch basil prior to freezing it.

The easiest way to do this is to steam it over boiling water for one minute. Plunge it immediately into a bowl of ice water and then lay it on a clean kitchen towel to dry.

Now spread it out on a cookie sheet and put it in the freezer. Once it's frozen, you can place it in a zipper bag. It will thaw quickly when removed from the freezer. It will also taste good.

##### **Freezing Chopped Leaves**

In this method you will also strip the leaves off the stems. Chop them as I would if using them fresh.

Now take an ice cube tray and fill it half way full of water. Place your herbs in each section of the tray. I placed about a Tablespoon in each. This way I know when I use them how much each cube holds.

The herbs may float. Don't worry about it too much. Just get them under the water as much as possible with no fuss. Place your tray in the freezer.

The next day take them out and pop off each cube with water. The herbs won't float and this way the herbs will be fully covered and frozen. Replace in your freezer. Simply pop out your frozen cubes and put them into a freezer bag. Take out how ever many cubes you need for your recipe and use in the same amounts as you would fresh Basil.