



Kitchen Gardens



BASIL 'SWEET NUFAR'

(OCIMUM BASILICUM)

CARE AND GROWING YOUR BASIL

Basil is among the most popular culinary herb in the world for flavoring food. Native to Asia, it was carried from India to Egypt to Greece in the ancient world, and remains a mainstay of cuisine in many cultures. grows 18 to 24 inches high and 12 to 15 inches wide. The dark green, shiny leaves grow up to 2 inches long on a tall, erect plant that is slow to bolt. You'll enjoy big harvests from this ultra-healthy, dependable variety. It makes a great choice for in door kitchen gardens as well as patio gardens,. Nufar is very pest and wilt resistant and easy to grow organically without any chemical pesticides. In the garden, it is often grown along-

side tomatoes, and is considered a guard plant protecting veggies and flowering plants from many predators. Nufar has a sweet, mild bite and will provide you with months of large, flavorful leaves for cooking. Pick the leaves and use fresh or dried in tomato dishes, pasta sauces, vegetables and soups.

Used in French, Italian, Greek, and other Mediterranean cuisines, this varieties is mildly flavored yet strongly aromatic, an irresistible combination! Nufar Hybrid is a Genovese type that resists fusarium wilt.

Nufar is easy to keep compact for a container herb garden and is a great cut and come back plant. You should cut down often to promote new tender growth and bushing . As your basil plants grow, pinch off the central stem, and prune back each stem when it has more than 8 sets of leaves. (Cut it back to the first or second set of leaves, harvesting the rest.) If you keep your plants well pinched and pruned, you should be able to harvest up to half a cup of fresh leaves every week from only one plant in your kitchen garden.

Basil loves hot weather and plenty of sunshine, In a kitchen garden a sunny warm spot will be produce good growth, exposure to florescent lighting as found in many kitchens works very well for this hybrid also, Basil needs consistently moist, (Not Drenched) rich soil. Mulch the plants indoors with a dried moss to retain moisture and the mulch will also ad a touch of acid to the soil which the plant loves. Save your spent coffee grounds and ad a couple of pinches to the top soil every 2 weeks or so to ad acid also. Be sure to change the moss mulch every month or so to avoid mold and mildew. Basil thrives in warmth but keep it a fair distance from your heating ducts in the winter which will strip it of needed humidity. Keep a spray bottle close at hand to mist the plant a couple times a day under very dry heat conditions.

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 ad 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:

Common Name

Sweet Basil

Botanical Name

Ocimum basilicum

Parts Used

Leaves

Variety

Nufar Hybrid

Habit Upright

Plant Height 12 in

Plant Width 12 in

Foliage Color Light Green

Light Requirements

at least 6 hours sun or artificial

Moisture Requirements

Moist, well-drained

Uses

Culinary, Fragrance, Medicinal,

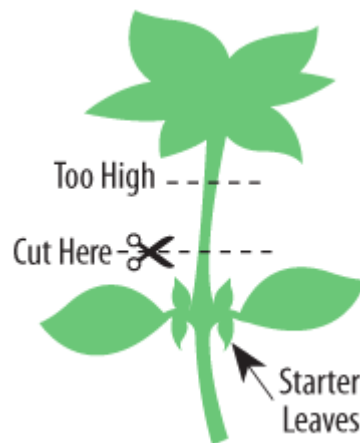
Additional Characteristics

Indoor Growing,
Bloom First Year,
Cut-and-Come-Again,
Pest Fighter,
Pruning Recommended,
Tomato Companion Planting.

HOW TO CUT BACK YOUR BASIL PLANT

Basil leaves are quite delicate and barely bruising the leaf releases the aroma of the essential oils, which quickly begin to dissipate. Therefore, pruning basil leaves with care is a necessity. Wait until the herb is about 6 inches tall before trimming basil leaves. The more often you prune the basil plant, the bushier and leafier it becomes.

As soon as flowers become evident, pinch them off so the energy in the plant stays diverted to foliage growth. If the basil plant is growing vertically, pinch the leaves from the top to encourage lateral growth. Use the pinched leaves or dry them, so there's no waste. Basil grows quickly, so

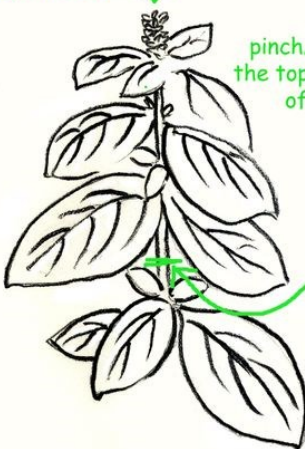


even if you don't want to use the leaves right away, keep trimming back the plant when it gets large and bushy.

Cut the herb back about ¼ inch above a node, 3 to 5 inches from the base of the plant. Leave a few inches of leaves on the plant after pruning. You can be quite aggressive when pruning basil they are rapid growers. Even after a major cutting back, the herb will be ready for pruning again in a few weeks.

Pinching or cutting back basil plants regularly encourages full, bushy plants. There is no mystery or exact science to cutting back basil plants. Trim a basil 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 basil leaves to stretch those culinary wings.

when basil begins to develop flowers



pinch/prune off the top 3 or 4 sets of leaves

Saving Your Fresh Cut Basil For Future Use.

Basil is one of the hardest herbs to dry without the use of a dehydrator even with this equipment you must be sure the basil is completely dry before placed in dehydrator or they will simply blacken. 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 Basil for storage. The Basil keeps 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 Basil 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 top 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 however many cubes you need for your recipe and use in the same amounts as you would fresh Basil.