



Basil

Basil is a culinary herb of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*).

It is the most popular herb in America and is estimated that there are 60 plus species of basil. More common basil varieties are: sweet, lemon, Genovese, cinnamon, Thai, Greek and large leaf Italian basil.

Basil is an excellent source of vitamin K and manganese; a very good source of copper, vitamin A (in the form of carotenoids such as beta-carotene), and vitamin C; and a good source of calcium, iron, folate, magnesium and omega-3 fatty acids.

Interesting Facts:

It was found in mummies in Egypt because the ancient Egyptians used this herb for embalming.

It's considered good luck to give someone a sprig of fresh basil when they're sick or on their birthday.

In Europe, it was thought to be helpful for stomach problems such as ulcers and spasms.

It was used as an antidote for snake bites in the Middle East and scorpion stings in India.

Basil has been shown to aid in the treatment of stomach ailments such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and dysentery. It also helps maintain healthy skin by preventing breakouts and reducing redness from rosacea.

Basil contains antioxidants which protect against heart disease and cancer.

It has also been used as an antiseptic for thousands of years due to its antibacterial properties.

How to use:

Early recipes for basil sauce call for boiling chopped leaves with wine vinegar, sugar, salt, olive oil and garlic.

Can be used fresh, dried, used in compound butters, frozen in oil or used to flavor oils and vinegars. Use in oils within 3-4 days.

How to grow:

It's an annual plant that's very easy to grow and is ready in 3-4 weeks.

Great for containers, in ground or grown inside during winter.

Helps keep pests away from plants.

Keep soil moist and don't crowd.

Biggest enemy - aphids/powdery mildew.

Pinch flowers to prevent bolting. Flowers can be used to make oils also.

Rosemary

Rosemary is part of the mint family, together with basil, lavender, oregano and many other herbs.

Rosemary can easily grow to five feet.

Distilled rosemary oil can be poisonous in strong doses.

Interesting Facts:

Rosemary has over 3 times more iron than spinach; it also has very high levels of antioxidants and vitamin A.

Rosemary oil was used in paint to prevent yellowing.

Rosemary contains ursolic acid, making it great for muscle aches and spasms.

How to use:

Rosemary is also used as an aromatic herb and its extract can be found in tinctures, bath oil, hair rinse, and insect repellent.

Rosemary may be used fresh or dried and is often found in baking, cooking and pickling spice mixes. Rosemary is a great herb to use in soups, stews and sauces for cooking or baking.

When dried, rosemary does not lose its scent. However, it is possible to lose the flavor if it is chopped too much or burnt at high temperatures.

How to grow:

Plant rosemary in early spring once all chances of frost have passed. This herb is a great option for raised garden beds, containers, and in-ground gardens.

Space rosemary plants 2 to 3 feet apart in an area with abundant sunlight and rich, well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0.

Plants are tolerant of salt spray, making them a good choice for pots on the beach.

Rosemary is quite difficult to grow from seeds.

Rosemary loves well-drained soil with pH of 6.0-7.5.

While rosemary is extremely drought-resistant, over watering is its biggest enemy.

Whiteflies, spider mites, scale, and mealybugs can all bother rosemary, as can powdery mildew and root rot, particularly in humid regions.

Thyme

Thyme is an herb that belongs to the mint family. There are around 350 species of thyme native to Europe, Asia and Africa.

The flavor and medicinal properties of thyme have been known to humans for at least a few thousand years.

Today thyme is grown mainly as a spice and as an ornamental plant but is used in the chemical industry to make hand disinfectants.

Interesting facts:

People used thyme throughout history for embalming and to protect from the Black Death.

Latest medical studies revealed that thyme can be used in a treatment of bronchitis, fungal infections and skin disorders (acne). Thyme is usually applied in the form of tea or ointments.

Thyme is thought to have antibacterial, insecticidal, and possibly anti fungal properties.

Essential oils extracted from the leaves and flowers contain substance called thymol. This substance has antiseptic properties and is active ingredient in the popular mouthwashes such as Listerine.

Dried thyme is very high in vitamin K and high in manganese and iron, while the fresh version contains significant quantities of vitamin C and A, iron and manganese.

Thyme is perennial plant which means that it can survive more than two years in the wild.

How to use:

Like most herbs, thyme can be used fresh, dried, and frozen in oil. Used to make flavored oils and vinegars, compound butter, appetizers, in soups, in breads, and on meats and vegetables.

How to grow:

Thyme plants generally grow from 6 to 16 inches tall and have white, purple or yellow flowers depending on the species.

The worse your soil is, the better your thyme plant may grow. The easy-going herb prefers sandy or loamy soil instead of moist soil, and can even thrive in rocky gravel.

Planting your thyme in containers, then opt for a clay or terracotta pot —the absorbent material will wick away additional moisture from the soil and help create the right environment for your thyme.

Thyme plants have no special needs when it comes to temperature and humidity and can thrive through most months of the year until there is frost, at which point they will go dormant for the winter.

Thyme can be propagated via seed, plant cuttings and parts of the root.

Thyme prefers sunny locations and well-drained soils. It can endure frost and drought.

Their largest period of growth is undoubtedly throughout the summer months—this is also when you'll notice their flowers in bloom, which will attract bees and various other insects.

Thyme needs good air circulation—especially in warm, humid climates—to avoid fungal diseases, so space plants out well to ensure good airflow.

Treat thyme plants each spring with an all-purpose fertilizer diluted to half-strength. Keeping the fertilizer at half-strength will ensure the plant doesn't produce too much foliage, which can dilute its fragrant oils and, thus, its flavor.

Thyme plants are very sensitive to too much moisture and will react poorly if overwatered even for a few weeks.

Yellowing leaves on your thyme can be yet another signal that it's suffering from root rot, it can also be an indication that your plant is receiving too much nitrogen.

Parsley

Parsley, or garden parsley is a species of flowering plant in the family Apiaceae that is native to Greece, Morocco and the former Yugoslavia.

Curly leaf is normally used as a garnish while Italian flat leaf is used for its stronger flavor.

Garden parsley is a bright green, biennial plant in temperate climates, or an annual herb in subtropical and tropical areas. A biennial, parsley produces its lush growth in the first year and blossoms during the second growing season.

Parsley is found to be a source of calcium, thiamin, vitamin B1, riboflavin, vitamin B2, niacin and vitamin C, besides being a rich source of iron.

Interesting facts:

Parsley attracts several species of wildlife. Some swallowtail butterflies use parsley as a host plant for their larvae; their caterpillars will feed on parsley for two weeks before turning into butterflies. Bees and other nectar-feeding insects also visit the flowers.

How to use:

Parsley is a key ingredient in several Middle Eastern salads such as *tabbouleh*; it is also often mixed in with the chickpeas and/or fava beans while making falafel (that gives the inside of the falafel its green color). Parsley is a component of a standard Seder plate arrangement, it is eaten to symbolize the flourishing of the Jews after first arriving in Egypt.

How to grow:

Likes full sun (6+ hours of sunlight) and well-draining soil that's rich in organic matter. Soil pH should ideally be around 6.0—slightly acidic.

Can start indoors (6-8 weeks before frost) or direct sow (3-4 weeks before last frost).

Keep soil moist as parsley is a slow starter.

Cut leaves from the outer stems of the plant whenever you need them. Leave the inner portions of the plant to mature.

Parsley can be used fresh, dried, frozen or infused in oils and vinegars.

Lavender

Lavender is a perennial flowering plant that will flower and grow year after year.

Lavender is the second most popular herb in the world (behind basil).

The word "lavendula" comes from two Latin words meaning "to wash."

Lavender has more than 45 species and over 450 different varieties.

Interesting facts:

The first popular use of lavender as a formula as an ingredient in deodorant was popularized during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Lavender has a calming effect on the autonomic nervous system and reduces cortisol and blood pressure.

It has been used for centuries as a treatment for skin conditions such as acne and dermatitis because of its anti-inflammatory properties that work by blocking histamine release from mast cells in the skin.

If you rub fresh lavender leaves on your insect bites, stings and itchy rashes, you will reduce itching and inflammation almost immediately.

Lavender oil is the only essential oil that still contains its own antioxidants, and over time it becomes more potent.

How to use:

Some edible uses for lavender are: lavender lemonade, lavender infused honey, compound butter, lavender simple syrup, lavender tea (four tsp of buds), or lavender infused baked goods, just to name a few.

Non edible uses include: essential oils, linen spray, infused bath salts, infused massage oils, lavender sachets, and soaps.

How to grow:

While lavender needs full sun exposure (6-8 hours a day), it is not tolerant of heat and does best when temperatures are below 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Keep the plant well watered but make sure your soil drains well and doesn't stay too wet or dry for long periods of time.

Lavender prefers well-drained soil with a pH level of 6.5-7.0.

Plant in early spring or fall.

Fill the pot with moistened soil rich in organic matter like compost, peat moss, manure, coir fiber or other substances.

Lavender will grow to a height of 2 feet tall and should be pruned annually in late summer.

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