

# Mint Family (Lamiaceae)

## Basil

*Ocimum basilicum*

aka Sweet Basil, Genovese Basil



Origin: South Asia

Varieties we grow: Nicola (Green),  
Red Shiraz (Purple), Lemon, Thai

Other common varieties:  
Cinnamon, Holy



### DID YOU KNOW?

Basil has been used in India as a protector against evil. Holy Basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) would be planted around temples and placed with the dead to protect them in the afterlife. Under British crown rule, Hindus could swear on Holy Basil instead of the Bible in court.

## GROWING BASIL



**APPEARANCE AND SIZE** Basil has bright green, elliptic leaves that are approximately 5cm long and 2-3cm wide. The plant can grow up to 30-60 cm with a spread of 30 cm. Small, tubular white or pink flowers emerge in late summer and are appreciated by pollinators.



**GROWING SEASON** Grow basil indoors from late Feb onwards and move outside in the summer. It is a tender annual plant, meaning it will complete its' life cycle within one year.



**SUNLIGHT** Grow in full sun, a sunny windowsill is perfect.



**SOIL** Prefers well-drained loam or sandy soil of any pH and a spot sheltered from strong winds.



**WATERING** Basil likes to stay moist so water deeply at least weekly. Plants growing in containers will need more frequent watering.



**HYDROPONICS** In a hydroponic system, basil likes an EC of 1.6 and a pH of 6. A warm environment and 14 hours of light encourage quick growth and a biweekly harvest.



**TIP** Basil is often grown alongside tomatoes, this method is called Companion Planting. The aromatic smell of basil may deter pests, such as aphids, away from the tomatoes.

## USING BASIL

### COMMON USES

Spicy and sweet, basil is a versatile herb. It can be used fresh in pesto, tomato based dishes, salads or even made into a flavoured butter. If using in a heated dish, such as a stew, add basil at the very end. Adding it too early in the cooking process can lead to a loss of its aromatic flavour.

### ALTERNATIVE USES

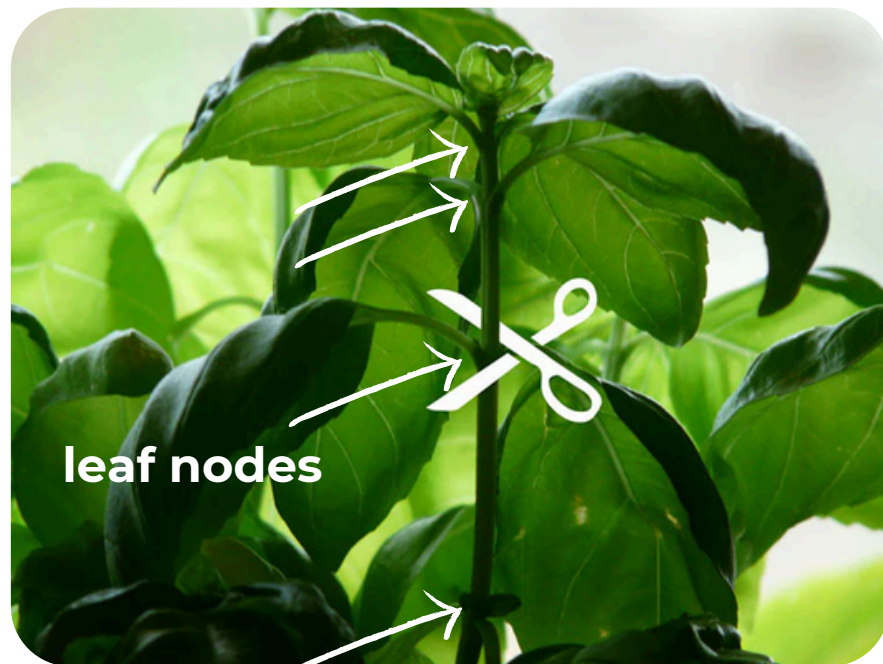
Try basil in cocktails (e.g. Basil Limoncello or a Basil Gin Smash), herbal tea, syrup for ice cream or baked goods or a herbal oil for salad dressing. Check our website [HERE](#) for inspiration!

### MEDICINAL

The essential oils of basil, such as eugenol and citronellol are anti-inflammatory, reducing risk of inflammation and therefore conditions such as arthritis, heart disease or bowel issues. So eat up!

## HARVESTING BASIL

Do not pick individual basil leaves, as the plant will not grow back. Instead, cut the top 1/3rd of the plant right above a leaf node on the stem, which is where the existing leaves grow out of. This encourages new growth from the leaf node below the cut. Once the plant grows bigger, you can harvest up to half of it. Pick out any emerging flower heads to promote leaf production and extend your basil harvests.



## STORING AND PRESERVING BASIL

### DRYING

Drying basil is not recommended, as it loses much of its aroma. It is best used fresh or ideally within 4-5 days of harvesting.

### FREEZING

Basil can be flash frozen or blanched and then frozen. It will turn black in the process. To maintain the green colour, remove stems and chop up the basil leaves. Cover them in oil and place in an ice cube tray, then freeze.

### STORAGE

Do not store basil in the fridge, it will bruise and brown. Instead, leave it on a kitchen side, out of direct sunlight in a plastic bag to retain moisture.

# COMMON PESTS

## APHIDS

### IDENTIFY

- More likely found on plants grown indoors.
- Usually signified by green and white small bugs that will be present in large numbers, some will have wings.
- You may spot sticky honeydew on the leaves which is secreted by the aphids, or tiny bite marks on the plant stem where the aphids are feeding, which then results in misshapen leaves.

### TREAT

- Check your plants regularly as there is a higher chance of controlling aphids if spotted early.
- Remove aphids when spotted by hand or wash off with water.
- You can also thoroughly spray with a mix of water and dish soap (1tsp dish soap to 1L water) to suffocate the aphids. Spray twice a week and wash the produce before eating.



## LEAFHOPPERS

### IDENTIFY

- More likely found on plants grown outside.
- Leafhoppers cause pale coarse mottling of the leaves, with the white leafhoppers hiding underneath.
- They may hop or fly a short distance when disturbed.
- They overwinter on the plant and become active from April/May until Autumn.

### TREAT

- Affected herbs are safe to eat and damage can generally be tolerated by host plants, and so control is not always necessary.
- If growing outside, encourage natural predators, such as lacewings and ladybirds, by planting a variety of aromatic herbs and colourful flowers.
- Leafhoppers can also be controlled with organic Neem oil spray or insecticidal soap. Spray before the plant has flowered, to reduce risk of affecting beneficial pollinators and predator insects. Thoroughly cover the top and bottom of the leaves and repeat the spraying if needed, according to the manufacturer's instructions.