

Basil

Every year I look forward to planting basil in my garden. It is a versatile herb and comes in many different varieties. Genovese is great for pesto, and Thai is perfect if you like a more pungent flavor. However, there is also lemon basil, which I find perfect for making pesto macaroni salad. There is even a little fine leaved variety that looks perfect in pots. Anyone can grow basil if you have a little bit of sun. Try interplanting it with your ornamentals for a little flair this summer.

Size: 2' tall and 18" wide, depending on variety

Exposure: Full sun; can take a little shade

How to Plant: Plant from nursery starts or by seed. Caution: Do not plant seed until the night temperatures are above 55 degrees or they won't sprout.

Pruning: Pinch back and harvest leaves at anytime. Keep flowers pinched back to promote more basil leaves.

Water needs: regular watering, but can take dry spells.

Soil: Regular garden soil is fine, or if planting in a pot use good moisture control potting soil.

Snapshot: Being an herb, Basil can take a lot of sun and even a little abuse. It is a member of the mint family so it is pretty tough. It can be planted in pots or directly in the ground. I have had good luck with intensive planting; just thin the plants as they grow. Basil also makes a great ornamental to plant among your flowers. With its beautiful flower spikes it attracts bees like crazy and smells delightful.

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