



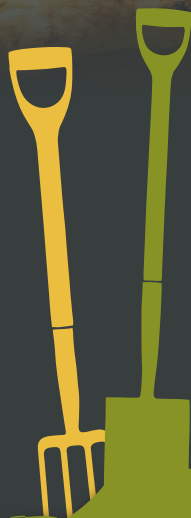
Basil



One of the main benefits of basil on pizza is its incredible aroma. Its fragrant aroma and intense flavour will enhance the taste of your pizza.

Fresh basil is best sprinkled on the pizza after it comes out of the oven, it adds a lovely freshness and stops it losing its colour and flavour when heated.

There are other ways to enjoy basil on a pizza too. Make it into a delicious green pesto to spoon over your pizza generously or make a basil oil to drizzle over your pizza once cooked. Either add exciting ways to use your freshly grown basil.





Basil

Fragrant, sweet smelling with a peppery taste, basil is an annual, which grows extremely quickly. Follow these steps to get delicious basil in no time!

Choose your basil plant

Basil is a versatile annual herb, popular in Italian cooking including pizza!

Sweet basil tends to dominate the supermarket shelves, but there are many more exciting types to try when you grow your own.

Sowing time

Basil can be grown from seed in March or April and planted out in June.

Alternatively a basil plant gives you a head start on the early seed germination.

Planting your basil

Pot on into individual containers when plants are big enough to handle.

Grow basil in well-drained, fertile soil in a warm, sheltered position out of direct midday sun. To get a quality crop that lasts from early spring to mid-autumn, it's best to grow basil in a container.

Put them outside in early summer after the last frost. To acclimatise them to conditions outdoors, stand them outside in a sheltered, lightly shaded spot during the day, and bring them back in at night. Do this daily for about two weeks.

Water sparingly – basil hates to sit in wet compost.

Crop Care

Outdoors, basil needs protection from wind and frost. Always water with care, ideally before midday, and avoid splashing the leaves. This should help prevent botrytis (powdery mould).

Plants will grow fast in containers, so expect to pot them up a few times during the growing season.

Basil is a half-hardy annual, so new plants will be needed each year.

Harvesting your peppers

Harvest the leaves individually rather than chopping the plant with scissors, as this will enable new leaves to grow.

Pick the leaves and tops of basil regularly throughout the summer to use fresh. You can be quite ruthless, so long as you leave at least three pairs of side shoots so your plants can regrow. Don't wash the leaves until you're ready to use them as they'll turn slimy.

Top tip for storing basil

Store leaves in the fridge for up to three days. Or, stand cut stems in a glass of water ready to use. To freeze basil, chop the leaves and place them in an ice-cube tray, cover with water and pop in the freezer. Use within five months.