

Description

Basil Sweet
Ocimum Basilicum
Family: Lamiacea

The full term for this plant is Sweet Genovese, which is the culinary herb now most widely available in shops. It has a shiny smooth leaf of about 5cm in length and 2.5cm width and slightly curled back over its ridge. It also develops a woody stem with a string of small white tubular flowers towards the end of summer. It exudes a strong scent similar to cloves and mint.

Growing Tips

Basil Sweet is an annual plant best grown in rich, well drained soil in a sunny spot, sheltered from wind, between October and March. It can be grown in pots on windowsills, but must be well watered. With eight weeks from sowing to harvesting the leaves, plantings should be done no later than December unless grown under glass. The original annual variety will die down as soon as the temperature drops below five degrees. In warmer climates it survives the winter and resumes growth in spring.

Parts Used

Leaves

Uses

The leaves are best used when fresh and are a favourite in Italian and Mediterranean dishes, and is what gives pesto its outstanding flavor. A good way to preserve them for cooking is by freezing them or infusing oils and vinegars with it.

Basil is also rich in vitamin C, carotene, calcium and phosphorus, with many different volatile oils. Tea made from the herb stimulates digestion, relieves Irritable Bowel Syndrome, hiccups and nausea. Also relieves anxiety and chest congestion.

Origin & History

Basil is considered a sacred herb in India and was brought to Europe through the Middle East.

A Belgian tale told if you ground it between two rocks, a scorpion would grow from its remains.

