

Parsley - How to Grow

Possibly the most popular herb grown in cooler areas, but also one of the most 'failed' herbs. There are two reasons for this - firstly parsley is not so quick or easy to germinate as many other herbs. Secondly, it does require a reasonably rich soil to perform well. PARSELY REQUIRES HIGH TEMPERATURES TO GERMINATE! Therefore, we recommend that you sow your seed in pots and keep them indoors, in a warm room, until the seedlings have sprouted.

□ 1 PREPARE AN OUTDOOR PLANTER: Long, rectangular planters (1' by 3') add a nice touch along a garden wall, but any pot will do. Put it in a sunny place, ideally visible from your kitchen. Use any potting soil with minimal or no peat. Parsley grows best in loamy soil with good drainage and moderate soil fertility. It does best in a cool and sunny area, although it will tolerate some light shade.

To speed up germination, soak the seeds in warm water for 24 hours before planting them. Make a shallow trench about 1/2" deep. Plant two to three seeds per inch along the length of row. Lightly cover the seeds with about 1/8" of soil and water well.

Keep the soil evenly moist until the seeds germinate, usually in two to three weeks. Once the seeds germinate and the seedlings are about 1" tall, thin them to 6" to 8" apart. Use scissors to snip the plants off near the soil line. Do not pull the plants as this will disturb the roots of the nearby plants.

Place a light layer of mulch around the plants to help conserve moisture and keep down weeds. When the soil seems dry, water the plants well. Parsley is rarely bothered by diseases or pests. Parsley should be ready to harvest in two months or less after sowing. To harvest, cut off the outer stalks close to the ground using scissors. Avoid plucking the green foliage off the tops and leaving bare stalks. For the best flavor, pick the parsley early in the day when the oils in the leaves are the strongest.

□ 2 OPTIONAL STEP: FEED YOUR PLANTS TEA. If you are a tea drinker, it's easy to dump your morning's tea leaves and leftover tea into the parsley planter. Try this on one side first; you may see a surprising, noticeable difference in the size and vigor of the tea-fed parsley.

□ 3 HARVEST PARSLEY JUST BEFORE USING: Pinch or clip stems near plant base above roots. Leave alone the young, short shoots to grow. Well-tended and protected from frost, your parsley plants will keep yielding fresh shoots, month after month.

□ 4 RINSE WELL: Swish in bowl of cold water, and gently pat dry.

□ 5 ADD AS A BOUQUET TO SOUP: A parsley sprig bundle adds flavor and nutrition without color to soups, stews and broths. Bundle parsley sprigs into a 6" cheesecloth square and tie with cotton kitchen string (along with bay leaf, fresh thyme, etc); toss wrapped bouquet into your crock pot or soup pot. When soup is done, remove and discard the bouquet.

□ 6 CHOP AND ADD: Chopped fresh parsley is a nutritious addition to many recipes - pasta salad, chicken and tuna salads all love fresh parsley. It's especially good when added to many tomato-based recipes. Add a handful of chopped parsley to spaghetti sauce, or to a one-pot meal of Italian sausage, tomatoes and zucchini. You can use just the leaves, or leaves plus stems.

□ 7 COOK & PAIR WITH WINE: If the chopped parsley over-thickens your tomato dish, try adding a splash of red wine - perhaps a nice, fruity Sangiovese - to the sauce. Then serve the Sangiovese with your meal; this full-bodied vino pairs perfectly with tomato & parsley dishes.

□ 8 PARSLEY NUTRITIONAL INFO & WARNING:

High in vitamins A, C, calcium, magnesium and iron, parsley is also the richest herb source of Vitamin K. Pregnant women need to be careful with parsley.