HERBS · A SUNNY PATIO AFTER FROST HAS PASSED

Let's grow basil.

Ocimum basilicum

This plan is for **Sweet or Genovese basil**

A sunny pot, a handful for dinner.

3-gallon pot **1 nursery start**

Before you start

Start outdoors after frost danger has passed and the weather is warm; choose a sunny patio spot for this plan.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 25, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Loves the sun

Choose your sunniest outdoor spot, with about 6 hours of sun.

WATER

Likes moisture

Keep the mix lightly moist; do not wait for repeated wilting.

FEEDING

Light, regular feeding

Use enriched mix first, then a gentle feed when needed.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One draining planter of verified 3 US gallon capacity (about 11.4 L)
- ✓ Buy 1 × 1 cu ft bag. Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US). A watering can; keep any leftover mix. Clean scissors for harvesting.
- ✓ 1 sweet basil nursery start

THE SOIL

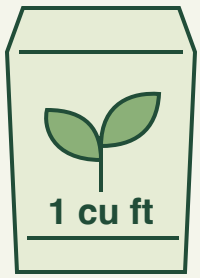
Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US), 1 cu ft bag, SKU 78951430. Includes starter nutrients; follow the current bag's feeding directions.

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

TAKE THIS TO THE GARDEN CENTER

What to buy, and how much.

Buy 1 × 1 cu ft bag.



ORGANIC POTTING MIX

1 bag

Leave room at the rim.
Keep spare mix.

Bag-count illustration; not retail packaging. Match the product name and size below.

LOOK FOR THIS BAG	**Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US)** 1 cu ft bag · about 28.3 L · SKU 78951430
MIX TO BUDGET FOR	**Up to 11.4 L before watering space and the root ball.**

This allowance uses a pot with a measured 3 US gallon capacity. Leave about 1 inch below the rim for watering. A 1 cu ft bag contains about 28.3 L, so expect plenty left over.

Before adding fertilizer: Fresh mix includes starter nutrients. Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Follow the feeding directions on your actual bag; “up to 2 months” is not a guaranteed waiting period. Do not combine the starter program with another full feed.

If your pot is a different size

Before planting, measure loose mix into the empty pot with a marked 1 US gallon container, up to the intended fill line. Record the volume, then remove enough mix to fit the nursery root ball. A nursery pot marked “#3” or “trade gallon” is not a measured US gallon. Leave space for watering; keep spare mix for later.

Use the bag’s cubic feet or liters to compare volumes. A dry quart on a soil bag is larger than a liquid quart on a measuring jug.

Compare all four starter shopping lists →

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A sunny patio after frost has passed. Start with **nursery start**.

THE POT

3-gallon pot

One container with holes in the bottom.

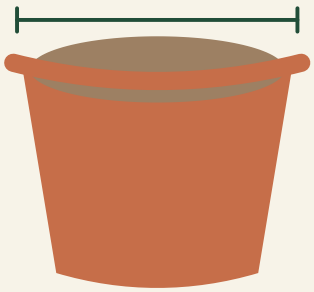
HOW MANY

1 nursery start

Sweet or Genovese basil is a useful kitchen choice.

THE CONTAINER

3-gallon pot



Drainage holes

START WITH

1 nursery start



Illustration · not to scale

3-gallon pot · 1 nursery start One container with holes in the bottom. Sweet or Genovese basil is a useful kitchen choice. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Wait for warmth

Set your pot outside after frost risk has passed and the weather has warmed.

02

Plant one start

Set the root ball at the same depth as in its nursery pot. Fill around it and water.

03

Choose the sunny spot

Give it room and light. Check the mix each morning.

04

Snip, then let it regrow

Once the plant has 6–8 leaves, cut just above a leaf pair, leaving several leaves on the plant.

> Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Start from seed

Sow 2 seeds ⅛ inch deep at the center of the pot; thin to 1 strong plant. Keep the surface moist. In warm soil around 75–85°F, germination commonly takes 10–14 days.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Check each morning. Water when the top inch is dry; wet the roots and let the pot drain.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1½ teaspoons in 1 US gallon of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

Every 3–4 weeks outdoors.

WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

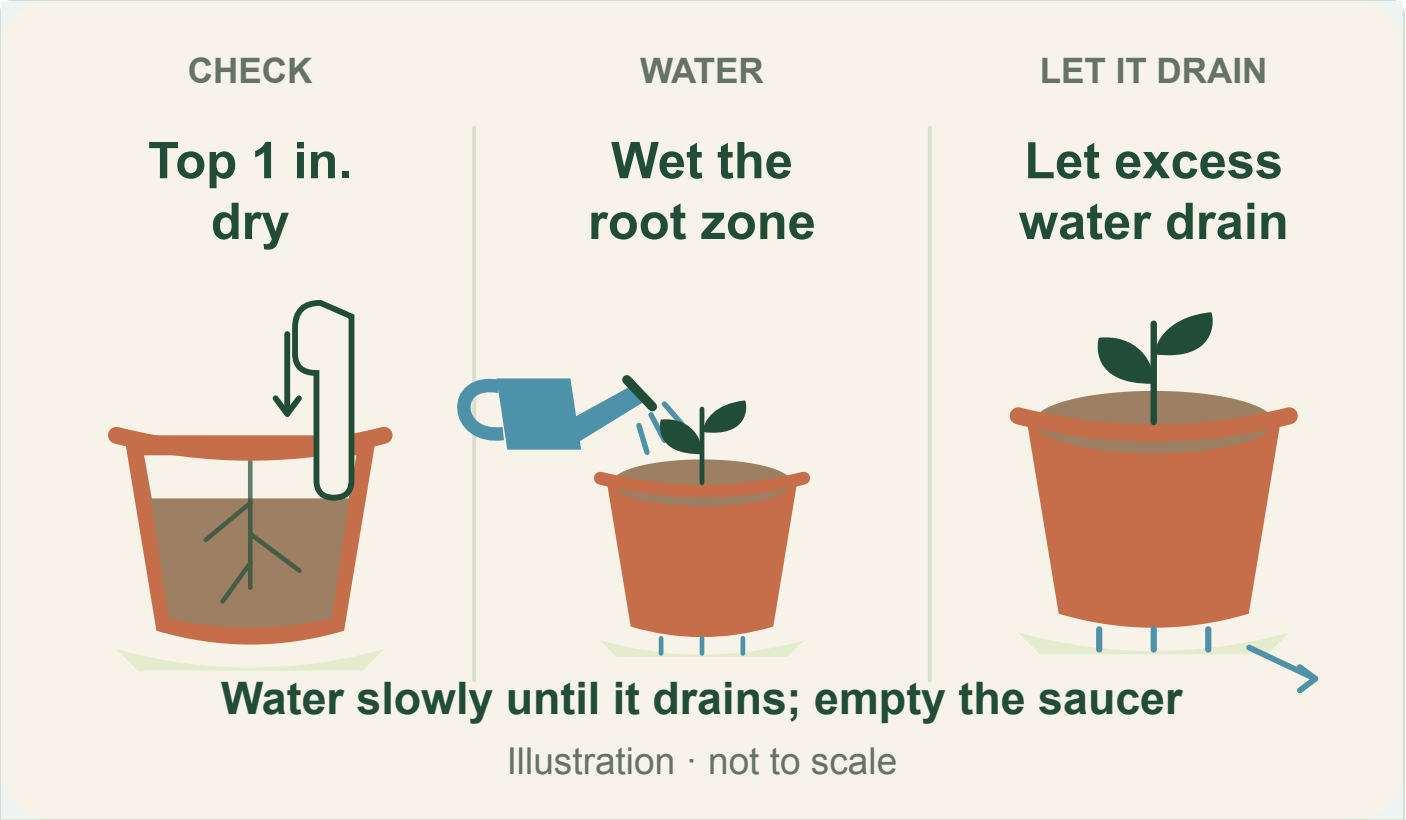
Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing.

Half the product's outdoor concentration; use this lighter herb recipe after starter feed ends.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check every morning. When the top inch is dry, water the soil until the pot drains. A sunny, windy patio may need attention daily; damp mix means you can skip watering.



Check before watering. Check each morning. Water when the top inch is dry; wet the roots and let the pot drain. Original illustration; not to scale.

> **The easy rule**
>
> Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

---

02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Check the potting-mix bag's feeding directions before starting the later routine below. "Feeds for up to 2 months" is a product claim, not a guaranteed two-month waiting period. Do not stack fertilizer programs.



1½ teaspoons in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. Every 3–4 weeks outdoors. Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing. Original illustration; not to scale.



US PRODUCT REFERENCE

Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

A SPECIFIC US PRODUCT

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

Mix 1½ teaspoons of the US 24-8-16 product into 1 gallon of water. Use at the roots every 3–4 weeks outdoors. This is half the manufacturer's outdoor concentration, following University of Minnesota guidance for container herbs. Do not add it on top of other ongoing fertilizer.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

Use the named US 24-8-16 formulation. Optional later purchase: one 1.5 lb pack. This is a conventional soluble fertilizer; the organic potting mix does not make the entire feeding plan organic. The mixing batch is not a per-pot watering dose.

---

03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

New growth and your first harvest

A healthy nursery start can give you a few leaves once it has established new growth. Seeds usually sprout in 10–14 days in warm soil.

When to move basil outdoors

Basil dislikes frost. Wait for warm weather locally; spring arrives at very different times across the US.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

REFERENCE PHOTOS

A closer look at basil roots

Look closely at the roots on these basil stem cuttings.



Five basil stem cuttings with pale roots exposed below the leaves.

Basilikum (Ocimum basilicum) Stecklinge – Josef Schlaghecken by Schlaghecken Josef. CC BY-SA 4.0. Resized and re-encoded; full frame preserved.

Something looking off?

Should I pick individual leaves or cut a stem?

For a bushier plant, snip a stem just above a leaf pair and leave healthy leaves below it.

Why is my basil wilting?

Check the mix first. Dry roots need water; soggy roots need drainage and time to dry. Do not add fertilizer as a first response.

Can I grow it on a kitchen windowsill?

Only if it gets enough light. A dim kitchen is harder than a sunny patio; an appropriate grow light may be needed indoors.

Settling in and harvesting

Help a nursery plant adjust outdoors

Nursery starts remove the wait for germination. If the plant was grown indoors, introduce it to outdoor conditions gradually before leaving it in full sun.

Harvest leaves without stripping the plant

Harvest modestly and regularly while leaving foliage to keep the plant growing. Heat and drying stress encourage flowering and can reduce leaf quality.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- Utah State University: basil growing and harvest ↗
  https://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/research/basil-in-the-garden
- University of Minnesota: feeding container herbs ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/growing-herbs
- University of Maryland: pot sizes ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-vegetables-containers-and-salad-tables
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html
- Volume conversion ↗
  https://www.nist.gov/pml/special-publication-811/nist-guide-si-appendix-b-conversion-factors/nist-guide-si-appendix-b8
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

Published September 23, 2026 · Updated September 29, 2026

Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.