

FREE WITH THE VIMTOBA APOTHECARY GARDEN

Medicinal Seed Planting Guide

~ seed to harvest, made simple ~

39 heirloom medicinal herbs · 12 chapters · USA-grown

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book.

This guide is the same one we hand to every customer who buys a Vimtoba seed kit. The first thirteen chapters cover the basics — what to plant first, when to water, how to know the soil is ready. After that, every chapter is one variety, start to harvest.

We trial every variety in our own home garden before writing the chapter, so the timing notes and harvest cues come from real beds, not a database. When something didn't work, we say so.

You don't need to read it cover to cover. Skim the table of contents, find your plant, and start there.

“Quality you can trust — across every seed we sell. If something isn't right, we make it right.”

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12 chapters · written from our own beds, our own kitchen, our own teapot.

Quick Start — Start Here (10-Minute Setup)



Why this matters

This seed kit + guide is here to take you from seed to harvest, step-by-step — even if you've never planted anything before. Do this quick setup today so planting feels simple (not overwhelming).

What to do

Pick your setup in 60 seconds

Containers (pots): Best for patio/porch/limited space. Easiest to control.

Raised bed: Best for a neat, beginner-friendly garden area with fewer weeds.

In-ground: Best if you already have a sunny yard spot and want the lowest-cost setup.

Choose your sunniest spot

Pick the place with the most direct sun and the least shade from trees, fences, or buildings.

If you're unsure, choose the spot that feels like the brightest part of your space.

What to buy today (minimal list)

Containers: Potting mix (not outdoor dirt). Pots with drain holes.

Raised bed / in-ground: Garden soil + compost (or a soil-compost blend).

Watering can or hose sprayer

Labels + marker (or painter's tape + marker)

Your first wins (easy confidence crops) Pick one or two to start: (check your weather)

Radish

Lettuce

Basil

Bush green beans **Why these:** they're beginner-friendly and give quick feedback so you feel progress fast. Don't plant everything at once yet — start small and win first.

Plant the simple way

Fill your pot/space with the right soil.

Make it loose and level with your hand.

Plant a small section first so it's easy to manage.

Label what you planted right away.

Watering rule of thumb (no stress)

Soil should feel like a wrung-out sponge: damp, not muddy.

If the top feels dry, it's time to water.

Water the soil, not the leaves.

Start a tiny note habit Write down:

What you planted

Where you planted it

The date

Common Mistakes

- Using outdoor dirt in pots (it packs down and drains poorly).
- Planting everything at once and getting overwhelmed.
- Putting the garden in "convenient shade" instead of real sun.
- Watering on a schedule instead of checking the soil.

Quick Tips

- Start small on purpose. One pot or one small patch is a win.
- Labels prevent the #1 beginner problem: forgetting what's what.
- If you're nervous, plant extra seeds in a small spot — then keep the strongest later.
- You don't need zones — just learn your local last frost date for warm-season planting later.

Mini Checklist

- I picked my setup: containers / raised bed / in-ground
- I chose the sunniest spot I have
- I have the right soil for my setup
- I planted at least one easy "first win" crop
- I labeled what I planted
- I wrote a quick note (what/where/date)

Watering Made Simple (Don't Drown Your Plants)



Why this matters

Most beginner plants don't die from "not enough love." They die from too much water, too often. A simple check-first habit keeps roots healthy and plants growing.

What to do

Use the check-first rule

Don't water by a schedule.

Water based on how the soil feels right now.

Do the finger check

Press your finger into the soil near the plant.

Check a little below the surface — the top can look dry while underneath is still wet.

If it feels dry, water.

If it feels damp, wait.

If it feels soggy or sticky, stop watering and let it dry out.

Aim for "wrung-out sponge" soil

The goal is damp, not muddy.

Water should soak in, not sit on top.

Water the soil, not the leaves

Pour near the base of the plant.

Wet leaves can invite problems, especially if they stay wet.

Morning is best if possible

It gives plants time to use water during the day.

It helps leaves dry faster if they get splashed.

Containers: what to do

Containers dry out faster, so check more often.

Make sure pots have drain holes. No drain holes = trapped water.

Water until the soil is evenly damp and extra water can drain out.

Empty any saucer that holds standing water.

Beds / in-ground: what to do

Water more deeply so moisture reaches roots.

Avoid constant light sprinkling — it keeps roots shallow and the surface wet.

Water slowly so it soaks in. If water runs off, pause and let it absorb, then continue.

Know the signs Signs you're overwatering

Soil stays soggy or smells sour

Leaves look limp but the soil is wet

Yellowing leaves without new healthy growth

Fungus or algae on the soil surface

Signs you're underwatering

Soil pulls away from pot edges or looks dusty

Leaves droop and perk up after watering

Crispy leaf edges or dry, curled leaves

Slow growth with dry soil

Common Mistakes

- Watering daily "just in case" instead of checking first.
- Using containers with no drain holes (or letting water sit in a saucer).
- Watering in hot sun so it evaporates fast and can stress plants.
- Light sprinkling over and over instead of watering the soil thoroughly.

Quick Tips

- Mulch (like shredded leaves or straw) helps keep moisture steady — don't pile it against stems.
- If you're unsure, wait and check again soon — plants handle "a little dry" better than "constantly wet."
- Windy days dry soil faster, especially in containers.
- **Use labels/notes:** "watered," "soil was dry," "soil was damp."

Mini Checklist

- I water based on soil feel, not a schedule
- I do a quick finger check before I water
- My soil feels like a wrung-out sponge (damp, not muddy)
- My containers have drain holes and don't sit in standing water
- I water the soil near the base, not the leaves
- I avoid constant light sprinkling in beds/in-ground

Planting Basics (Depth, Spacing, and Thinning — Without the Confusion)



Why this matters

Most seed “failures” come from a few fixable basics: planting too deep, crowding, or skipping thinning. Learn the concepts now, and the crop pages will feel easy.

What to do

Understand planting depth (the simple idea)

Too deep = no sprout (the seed runs out of energy before it reaches light).

Too shallow = dries out (the seed can't stay evenly moist).

Most seeds do best shallow. Bigger seeds can go a bit deeper than tiny seeds.

Get good seed-to-soil contact

Seeds sprout best when they touch moist soil.

After you cover seeds, press the soil gently with your palm or fingertips.

Don't pack it hard — just firm it so the seed isn't floating in air gaps.

Cover lightly

Use loose soil to cover the seeds.

Think "light blanket," not "buried treasure."

Water gently after planting

Moisten the soil without moving the seeds.

Use a gentle shower setting or carefully pour so it soaks in.

If seeds appear on top, smooth and re-cover lightly.

Understand spacing (why plants need room)

Crowded plants compete for light, water, and food.

Crowding reduces airflow and can invite problems.

If seedlings are touching, it's time to thin.

Thin seedlings (this is not "wasting plants")

When multiple seedlings sprout close together, they can't all thrive in the same spot.

Thinning helps the remaining plants grow bigger and healthier.

Think "choosing the strongest team," not throwing plants away.

How to thin (beginner-friendly)

Wait until seedlings look clearly established and you can spot the strongest ones.

Keep the healthiest-looking seedlings (upright, sturdy, good color).

Best method: snip extras at soil level with small scissors.

Pulling can disturb the roots of the seedling you want to keep.

Label right away

Label the crop name as soon as you plant.

Add the planting date if you can.

Common Mistakes

- Planting too deep and giving up when nothing appears.
- Watering with a strong stream and washing seeds out of place.
- Letting seedlings stay crowded because thinning feels wasteful.
- Forgetting to label, then not knowing what's sprouting.

Quick Tips

- Tiny seeds need extra gentle watering so they don't float away.
- If you're nervous about depth, plant slightly shallow and cover lightly — then keep the surface evenly moist.
- Thinning feels hard the first time, but it's one of the fastest ways to improve results.
- A simple label beats "I'll remember" every time.

Mini Checklist

- I planted seeds shallow and covered lightly
- I gently pressed the soil for seed-to-soil contact
- I watered gently without washing seeds away
- I understand crowding hurts growth and airflow
- I'm willing to thin by snipping extras at soil level
- I labeled what I planted right away

Soil Basics That Actually Matter (Drainage First)



Why this matters

Roots need both water AND air. If soil stays soggy, roots can't breathe and plants struggle fast. Get drainage right and gardening becomes much easier.

What to do

Start with the core idea

Water is important, but roots also need air spaces in the soil.

Soil that stays muddy can cause root problems and slow growth.

Drainage basics (containers)

Use containers with drain holes. No holes = trapped water.

After watering, water should be able to leave the pot.

If a saucer holds water, empty it so roots aren't sitting in it.

Drainage basics (beds / in-ground)

Avoid low spots where water collects after rain.

Watch after watering or rain:

If water sits on the surface or the area stays swampy, drainage is an issue.

If you can't change spots, build up a small mound/raised row or use containers.

What good soil looks and feels like

Loose and crumbly, not packed like clay.

Breaks apart easily in your hand, not in hard clumps.

Holds moisture but doesn't stay muddy or sticky.

Smells earthy, not sour.

Quick feel test: squeeze a handful — it should crumble, not stay a sticky ball.

Simple improvements (keep it beginner-safe)

Containers: use potting mix (not outdoor dirt).

Beds / in-ground: add compost to improve soil over time.

Compost helps heavy soil drain better and helps sandy soil hold moisture longer.

What NOT to do

Don't try to "fix" soggy soil by fertilizing. Fertilizer doesn't fix drainage.

Don't stomp soil down or work it when it's wet — it compacts and drains worse.

Don't aggressively till wet soil "to fluff it up." It can turn into hard clumps later.

When plants struggle, check this order

Drainage

Sun

Watering habits

Only then start blaming seeds.

Common Mistakes

- Using outdoor dirt in containers (it packs down and traps water).
- Planting in a low spot where water collects.
- Working soil when it's wet and turning it into a compacted mess.
- Adding fertilizer when the real issue is soggy soil.

Quick Tips

- A pot with drain holes beats a fancy pot with none.
- If soil stays muddy, pause watering and let it dry before changing anything else.
- Compost is the easiest upgrade for beds and in-ground gardens.
- If your spot stays wet after rain, consider containers or a raised area instead.

Mini Checklist

- My containers have drain holes and don't hold standing water
- My garden spot doesn't stay waterlogged after watering or rain
- My soil feels loose and crumbly, not packed into hard clumps
- I'm using potting mix for containers (not outdoor dirt)
- I'm improving beds/in-ground soil with compost over time
- If plants struggle, I'll check drainage + sun + watering first

Sunlight Basics (What “Full Sun” Really Means)



Why this matters

If plants don't get enough sun, they grow slow and weak — even with great seeds. Put your garden in the right light, and everything becomes easier.

What to do

Know the simple sunlight words

Full sun: lots of direct sun on the plant

Part sun: mixed sun and shade through the day

Shade: mostly indirect light, with little direct sun

Bright shade is still shade — plants need direct sun, not just daylight.

The core idea

Most vegetables want a lot of sun.

Leafy greens tolerate less sun than fruiting crops (tomatoes, peppers, squash).

If a sun-hungry crop gets too much shade, it won't perform well.

Find your best spot (beginner method)

Go outside and notice where sun hits:

Morning

Midday

Late day

Watch for shifting shade from:

Trees

Buildings

Fences

Overhangs

Pick the spot that stays sunny the longest and has the least shade.

If you can't observe in real time, make quick notes when you pass by.

Containers vs beds (how to use sun smart)

Beds/in-ground: choose the sunniest location before you plant. Hard to change later.

Containers: you can "chase the sun" a bit by moving a pot to a brighter spot.

Don't move constantly — plants like a stable home.

Move for a clear reason (more sun), then leave it there.

If you don't have perfect sun

Grow leafy greens + herbs in part sun.

Put sun-hungry crops in the brightest spot you have.

Use light to your advantage:

Bright walls/fences can bounce extra light onto plants.

Keep it safe and simple — avoid mirrors/foil that can create hot spots.

If you only have one great sunny spot, give it to fruiting crops first.

How to tell if sun is the real problem

Slow growth even with good watering

Leggy seedlings (tall, skinny, leaning toward light)

Weak plants that flop easily

Low flowering/fruiting on crops that should produce

Best sun crops (sun-hungry)

Tomatoes (Large Cherry, Roma)

Peppers (Bell, Jalapeño)

Cucumbers (Slicing, Pickling)

Squash family (zucchini, yellow squash, butternut, sugar pie pumpkin)

Bush green beans

Sunflower

More shade-tolerant crops (more forgiving)

Lettuce (Buttercrunch, Cimarron Red)

Spinach

Arugula

Kale

Swiss chard

Parsley

Cilantro

Common Mistakes

- Planting in convenient shade because it's closer to the door or hose.
- Moving containers too often and stressing plants.
- Expecting tomatoes or peppers to thrive in part sun.
- Blaming seeds before checking sun and watering.

Quick Tips

- If you're unsure, start leafy greens first — they teach you fast.
- Leggy seedlings usually mean "more light," not "bad seeds."
- Pick one "best sun" spot and commit to it for a while.
- Take a quick photo from the same angle — it helps you spot weak, stretchy growth.

Mini Checklist

- I understand full sun vs part sun vs shade
- I found the sunniest spot by observing morning/midday/late day light
- I placed sun-hungry crops in my brightest location
- I chose leafy greens/herbs if my space is part sun
- I'm not moving pots constantly — only for a clear sun upgrade
- If plants struggle, I'll check sunlight before blaming seeds

Direct Sow vs Start Indoors (Simple Decision Guide)



Why this matters

Choosing the right planting method makes success much easier. This helps you decide fast — without complicated calendars.

What to do

Know the simple definitions

Direct sow: plant seeds where they will grow (outside in your container, bed, or ground).

Direct sow works in containers too — it just means “final spot.”

Start indoors: start seeds in small containers inside, then move them outside later.

Why choose direct sow (simple pros/cons) Pros

Simplest setup

No transplanting step

Many plants grow strong this way

Cons

Weather can slow things down

Seeds can be disturbed by heavy rain, wind, or pests

Why choose starting indoors (simple pros/cons) Pros

More control (warmth, moisture)

Can give you a head start before your local last frost date

Helpful for slower-starting crops

Cons

More gear and attention

You must transplant later

Transplant shock: plants can droop or pause growth after moving outside

Easiest beginner path

Simplest route: direct sow most of your garden.

If you want a head start: start indoors only a couple crops, and direct sow the rest.

If you want simplest: direct sow these (often easiest)

Radish (Cherry Belle)

Peas

Bush green beans

Cucumbers (Slicing, Pickling)

Zucchini

Yellow summer squash

Butternut squash

Sugar pie pumpkin

Sunflower

Arugula (optional)

Lettuce (optional)

Dill (optional)

Cilantro (optional)

If you want a head start: start indoors these (often helpful)

Tomatoes (Large Cherry, Roma)

Peppers (Bell, Jalapeño)

Basil (optional)

Broccoli (optional)

Cabbage (optional)

Either works (many people succeed either way)

Lettuce (Buttercrunch, Cimarron Red)

Kale

Swiss chard

Bok choy

Parsley

Use your local last frost date (conceptually)

Many gardeners wait to move warm-loving seedlings outside until after the local last frost date.

Cool-weather crops are often more flexible.

Minimal beginner indoor setup (keep it simple)

Small cups or a seed tray (with drainage)

Potting mix

Light source (bright window or a simple grow light)

Labels + marker

Gentle watering method (small cup, squeeze bottle, or light sprayer)

Your beginner plan

Pick one or two crops to start indoors (like tomatoes and peppers).

Direct sow the rest.

This keeps you learning without getting overwhelmed.

Common Mistakes

- Starting too many crops indoors and getting overwhelmed.
- Using outdoor dirt indoors instead of potting mix.
- Forgetting labels and mixing seedlings up.
- Transplanting stressed seedlings instead of fixing light and watering first.

Quick Tips

- Starting indoors is optional — you can still grow a great garden by direct sowing.
- Label indoor cups right away. It's easy to forget what's what.
- If seedlings look tall and stretchy indoors, they usually need more light.
- **To reduce transplant shock:** water before moving, start in shade, then move into more sun.

Mini Checklist

- I understand direct sow vs start indoors
- I chose a mostly direct-sow plan for simplicity
- I picked only one or two crops to start indoors (if any)
- I have a minimal indoor setup (cups/tray, potting mix, light, labels)
- I'm using my local last frost date to guide warm crops moving outside
- I expect a short adjustment period after transplanting

Indoor Seed Starting Basics (Light, Water, and Airflow)



Why this matters

Most indoor seedlings fail for simple reasons: not enough light, too much water, and stale air. Fix those three, and indoor starting becomes predictable.

What to do

Start with a minimal setup

Seed tray or small cups with drainage

Potting mix (light, indoor-friendly)

Labels + marker

A bright window or a simple grow light

The 3 keys indoors

Light: strong enough so seedlings don't stretch

Water: damp, not soggy

Airflow: gentle fresh air to discourage mold and collapse

Light: prevent stretchy seedlings

Put seedlings in your brightest spot or under a light source.

A bright room is not the same as strong plant light.

Rotate the tray if seedlings lean strongly toward one direction.

Sign: tall, thin, leaning seedlings = not enough light.

Fix: move to stronger light (brighter window or grow light).

Water: keep soil damp, not muddy

Use the "wrung-out sponge" feel.

Water gently so you don't flatten tiny seedlings.

Bottom watering is OK:

Add water to a tray below so soil drinks from the bottom.

Then remove extra water so cups don't sit in it.

Never let cups sit in water. Soggy roots cause problems fast.

Water the soil, not the leaves.

Airflow: reduce mold and seedling collapse

Give seedlings fresh air — stale, humid air causes trouble.

A small fan on a gentle setting can help (don't blast seedlings directly).

Avoid crowding trays tightly together.

Signs → quick fixes (simple and calm)

Leggy seedlings (tall, skinny, weak)

Cause: too little light

Fix: stronger light + rotate tray + steady watering

Mushy/collapsing seedlings (falling over near the soil line)

Cause: too wet + low airflow

Fix: let soil dry slightly, increase airflow, avoid wet leaves, remove the worst ones

Before moving outdoors (tiny preview)

Indoor plants need a gradual change to outside conditions.

Wind, sun, and temperature swings can shock them if you move them suddenly.

Common Mistakes

- Starting seedlings in low light and wondering why they stretch.
- Keeping soil constantly wet and losing seedlings to collapse.
- Using cups with no drainage.
- Spraying leaves often and keeping everything too humid.

Quick Tips

- Labels save you. Indoor seedlings look surprisingly similar at first.
- If the soil is damp, don't water again "just in case."
- If you see algae or fuzzy growth, reduce watering and increase airflow.
- One change at a time helps you learn what worked.

Mini Checklist

- My tray/cups have drainage and are filled with potting mix
- My seedlings are in strong light (bright window or grow light)
- I'm watering based on soil feel (damp, not soggy)
- I never let cups sit in standing water
- I have gentle airflow (not stale, trapped humidity)
- I understand indoor seedlings need a gradual move outdoors

Hardening Off (Move Plants Outdoors Without Shock)



Why this matters

Indoor seedlings are “soft.” Outdoors has stronger sun, wind, and temperature swings. Hardening off helps plants adjust so they don’t burn, wilt, or stall.

What to do

What "hardening off" means

Hardening off = gradually introducing indoor plants to outdoor sun, wind, and temperatures.

When to do it (simple guidance)

Do this before you transplant indoor-started seedlings into their final outdoor spot.

Warm-loving crops are often moved out after your local last frost date.

Step-by-step (no stress, no numbers) Start in shade and shelter

Put seedlings outside in bright shade, protected from wind.

Bright shade = you can see a clear shadow, but it's soft.

Good spots: porch, under an overhang, beside a wall, sheltered corner.

Avoid harsh midday sun at first

Early direct sun can sunburn indoor leaves quickly.

Keep first outings gentle: shade, filtered light, or soft morning/late-day light.

Increase outdoor exposure gradually

Add a little more sun and open-air time each outing.

If plants look happy, keep progressing.

If they look stressed, back up to more shade/shelter and go slower.

Protect from cold nights and harsh wind early on

If nights feel cold or winds are strong, bring plants in or tuck them under cover.

Wind can dry seedlings fast and bend stems.

Where to place them (simple options)

Bright shade under a tree (not deep shade)

A porch or stoop with indirect light

Under a patio umbrella or awning

Next to a light-colored wall for reflected light (avoid heat traps)

What to watch for

Slight droop that recovers: usually normal adjustment

Severe wilt: stays limp even after shade + water → too much sun/wind too fast

Sunburn: bleached/white/papery patches → reduce sun and go slower

Wind damage: torn leaves, bent stems, drying out fast → move to a sheltered spot

After plants handle outdoors

Transplant gently (don't rough up roots).

Water in well so soil settles around roots.

Give them a gentle day after transplanting (not full blast sun immediately).

A little droop can be normal — don't panic and start re-potting.

Common Mistakes

- Moving seedlings from indoors straight into full sun.
- Leaving plants out on a cold night or in strong wind too soon.
- Forgetting to water and then blaming the sun.
- Handling plants constantly (moving, repotting, replanting) during the transition.

Quick Tips

- A sheltered "training spot" outside makes hardening off easy.
- Keep labels on — seedlings look similar, especially outdoors.
- Water before plants get stressed. Don't wait for dramatic wilting.
- If you're unsure, go slower. Slow is fast in gardening.

Mini Checklist

- I understand hardening off means gradual outdoor exposure
- I started seedlings in bright shade with wind protection
- I avoided harsh midday sun at first
- I'm increasing exposure based on how plants respond
- I'm protecting plants from cold nights and harsh wind early on
- Once they're ready, I'll transplant gently and water in

Harvest Basics (Pick Often, Pick Right, Keep Plants Producing)



Why this matters

Harvesting is part of growing. Many plants make more food when you pick regularly. Harvest the right way and your garden keeps producing instead of stopping.

What to do

Start with the core idea

Picking isn't "taking away." It's a signal to many plants to keep growing.

Regular harvesting often improves tenderness, flavor, and production.

Know simple "ready to harvest" cues Leafy greens

Pick the outer leaves first.

Leave the center growing point so the plant keeps making new leaves.

Don't strip the plant bare — leave plenty behind so it can keep powering growth.

Herbs

Pinch or clip stems regularly.

Avoid taking the whole plant at once — leave healthy growth behind.

If a plant starts trying to flower, regular picking helps keep it in "leaf mode."

Fruiting crops

Pick when fruits look full-colored for their type, feel firm, and detach easily with a gentle twist.

Pick regularly so the plant puts energy into making more.

Root crops

Harvest when the top looks like it has "sized up" and seems worth pulling.

Don't force a fixed size — use your eyes now, and crop page cues later.

Harvest gently (don't damage the plant)

Use clean scissors or snips for clean cuts.

Avoid yanking or tearing — it can split stems and invite problems.

Harvest in the cooler part of the day if possible for crisper leaves and less stress.

What to do after harvesting

Check soil moisture and water if needed.

If plants look stressed (droopy from heat), give brief shade/cover and let them recover.

Store produce simply:

Keep greens cool and dry

Don't leave harvest in hot sun

Wash right before eating (not right before storing)

Quick crop examples (from your kit)

Leafy: lettuce, arugula, spinach, kale, swiss chard, bok choy

Herbs: basil, parsley, dill, cilantro

Fruiting: tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, bush beans

Roots: radish, beet, carrot

Common Mistakes

- Cutting the growing center on leafy greens and stopping regrowth.
- Waiting too long and ending up with tough/bitter leaves or bolting plants.
- Pulling/yanking fruit and breaking stems.
- Harvesting too rarely on "cut-and-come-again" crops (greens/herbs), slowing new growth.

Quick Tips

- If you're nervous, start small — just a few leaves or stems.
- Clean snips reduce damage and make harvesting easy.
- Regular picking can reduce bitterness and delay bolting (going to flower).
- Take a quick photo + note what you harvested — you'll learn timing fast.

Mini Checklist

- I understand harvesting can increase production for many crops
- For leafy greens, I'm picking outer leaves and leaving the center growing point
- For herbs, I'm clipping regularly without taking the whole plant
- I'm using clean scissors/snips and avoiding yanking
- After harvesting, I check moisture and water if needed
- I keep harvested produce out of hot sun and store it simply

[#toc](Back to TOC)Plant Profile

Italian Large Leaf Basil



AT A GLANCE

SUN

Full Sun (6-8 hours)

PLANTING DEPTH

1/4 inch

SPACING

12-18 inches

DAYS TO GERMINATION

5-10 Days

DAYS TO MATURITY

60-70 Days

Why This Is Easy

Productive and rewarding: Once established, basil produces steady harvests of large, fragrant leaves throughout the summer.

Forgiving: Regularly pinching the stems encourages branching, allowing for multiple harvests from a single planting.

Planting Specs (Depth + Spacing)

- **Depth:** 1/4 inch
- **Spacing:** Thin seedlings to 10-12 inches apart.

Timeline (What to Expect)

- **Sprout window:** 5-10 days
- **When to thin:** When seedlings are 2-3 inches tall
- **First harvest:** 25-30 days (once plants reach 6-8 inches tall)
- **Full maturity:** 60-75 days
- **Cold risk:** Quality drops and plants may be damaged if temperatures fall below 50°F. Basil is killed by frost.

When to Plant

Basil is a “warm-weather crop.” It grows best in heat and does not tolerate cold.

Spring: Plant only after your local last frost date has passed and soil temperatures reach at least 60°F. There is no benefit to planting early—basil dislikes cold soil.

Summer: The main growing season. Basil thrives when temperatures stay consistently warm.

Cold warning: Basil struggles below 50°F and is killed by frost. Even brief cold exposure can cause leaves to turn black.

How to Plant

Either method works, though starting indoors provides an earlier harvest.

Start indoors (recommended): Sow seeds 4–6 weeks before your last frost date in small containers filled with seed-starting mix. Keep soil warm (65–70°F) for best germination. Transplant outdoors only after all frost danger has passed.

Direct sow: Wait until after your last frost date and once soil has warmed. Scatter seeds thinly over prepared soil.

Cover: Sprinkle a light layer of soil over the seeds (about 1/4 inch).

Pat: Gently press the soil so seeds make contact with the soil.

Water: Mist gently to avoid washing seeds away.

Care Made Simple

Watering Logic

Check-First Watering: Basil needs consistent moisture to remain productive.

If soil feels dry → Water.

If damp → Wait.

Tip: Basil prefers moist soil but does not tolerate soggy roots. Avoid letting soil dry out completely, as stress encourages early bolting.

Sun & Shade

Sun & Heat:

Basil prefers full sun, with at least 6 hours of direct light daily.

In very hot climates (above 90°F), light afternoon shade can help reduce stress.

Feeding (if applicable)

Feeding: Usually unnecessary if planted in good soil or compost. Basil does not require heavy feeding.

Harvest (Keep It Producing)

Pinch-and-Grow Method: For best results, pinch or snip stems just above a set of leaves.

Leave the Base: Do not strip the plant bare. Leave at least 2–3 sets of leaves on each stem so the plant can continue growing.

Pinch Early and Often: Begin harvesting once the plant has several sets of leaves. Regular pinching promotes bushy growth and delays flowering.

Flavor Note: Harvest in the morning, when essential oils are strongest, for the best flavor.

Common Problems + Quick Fixes

Bolting (Flower stalk appears):

What it is: The plant sends up a flower spike as it prepares to go to seed. This often happens during long, hot days or when the plant is stressed.

Action: Pinch off flower buds as soon as they appear. Regular harvesting helps delay bolting. Once flowers fully open, leaf flavor declines.

Blackened leaves:

Cause: Cold damage. Even temperatures in the 40s can trigger this.

Action: Remove damaged leaves and protect plants if cold nights are expected. If frost threatens, harvest the entire plant or bring containers indoors.

Holes in leaves:

Cause: Slugs, Japanese beetles, or other chewing pests.

Action: Check leaf undersides and hand-pick pests. Rinse plants with a gentle spray of water and keep the area clean and weed-free.

Yellowing leaves:

Cause: Often overwatering or poor drainage.

Action: Check soil moisture and drainage. Ensure containers have drainage holes and soil is not staying soggy.

Quick Tips

- Pinching = More Basil: Frequent harvesting leads to bushier, more productive plants.
- **Warm Soil Matters:** Planting too early slows growth and can stunt basil.
- **Harvest Before Frost:** Basil is killed by frost. When cold weather approaches, harvest everything and preserve it by freezing, drying, or making pesto.

Mini Checklist

- Soil is loosened and warm (at least 60°F)
- Seeds planted shallow (1/4 inch)
- Planted after last frost date—basil does not tolerate cold
- Soil kept consistently moist (not soggy)
- Seedlings thinned to prevent overcrowding
- Pinching and harvesting done regularly to encourage bushy growth
- Flower buds removed promptly

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Cilantro / Coriander



AT A GLANCE

SUN
Full Sun / Partial Shade

PLANTING DEPTH
1/4 to 1/2 inch

SPACING
4–6 inches

DAYS TO GERMINATION
7–14 Days

DAYS TO MATURITY
50–100 Days

Why This Is Easy

Two harvests from one plant: You can harvest fresh cilantro leaves first, then allow the plant to flower and collect coriander seeds later—two flavors from a single planting.

Cool-weather friendly: Cilantro grows best in spring and fall, when many other herbs slow down, and it tolerates light frost.

Planting Specs (Depth + Spacing)

- **Depth:** 1/4 to 1/2 inch
- **Spacing:** Thin seedlings to 2–4 inches apart for leaf harvest, or 6–8 inches apart if growing primarily for seed.

Timeline (What to Expect)

- **Sprout window:** 7–14 days (up to 21 days in cooler soil)
- **When to thin:** When seedlings are 2–3 inches tall
- **First leaf harvest:** 3–4 weeks after sprouting, once plants reach about 6 inches tall
- **Seed harvest (coriander):** About 90–100 days from planting, after flowers fade and seeds turn brown
- **Bolting note:** Cilantro flowers and goes to seed quickly in heat. This is normal and expected.

When to Plant

Cilantro is a cool-weather herb that performs best in spring and fall.

Spring: Plant as soon as the soil can be worked, about 2–3 weeks before your last frost date. Cilantro tolerates light frost.

Summer: Not ideal. Temperatures above 75–80°F trigger rapid bolting. Summer plantings usually give only a short leaf harvest before flowering.

Fall: An excellent planting window. Cooler temperatures extend leaf production. Plant 6–8 weeks before your first frost.

Succession planting: For a steady supply of leaves, sow new seeds every 2–3 weeks during spring and again in fall.

How to Plant

Direct sowing works best, as cilantro has a taproot and does not transplant well.

Prepare: Choose a location with full sun to part shade. In warmer climates, afternoon shade helps slow bolting. Loosen soil and mix in compost.

Optional seed prep: Cilantro “seeds” are actually two seeds joined together. Gently crushing the husk and soaking seeds for 24 hours can speed germination.

Sow: Plant seeds 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep, spaced about 1–2 inches apart.

Cover: Fill soil over seeds and press gently. Seeds need darkness to germinate.

Water: Water gently after planting and keep soil moist, not soggy, until sprouts appear.

Rows: Space rows 12–15 inches apart.

Care Made Simple

Watering Logic

Check-First Watering: Cilantro prefers consistent moisture but does not like soggy soil.

If soil feels dry → Water.

If damp → Wait.

Tip: Mulching around plants helps keep soil cool and moist, which can delay bolting.

Sun & Shade

Sun & Heat:

Full sun works well in cool weather.

In warmer conditions, afternoon shade helps extend the leaf harvest.

When temperatures rise above 75–80°F, bolting is expected. Flowers are useful for pollinators, and seeds can be harvested later.

Feeding (if applicable)

Feeding: Cilantro is a light feeder. A small amount of balanced fertilizer once or twice during the season is sufficient. Avoid overfeeding, which can reduce flavor.

Harvest (Keep It Producing)

Leaves (Cilantro):

Begin harvesting when plants reach about 6 inches tall.

Cut the top 2–3 inches of stems to encourage bushier growth and delay bolting.

Harvest regularly. Younger leaves have the best flavor.

Once a thick central stalk forms and leaves become feathery, bolting has begun and leaf quality declines.

Seeds (Coriander):

Allow plants to flower. Small white or pale pink blooms will appear.

After flowers fade, green seeds form and gradually turn light brown.

Cut seed heads and place them upside down in a paper bag to dry for 1–2 weeks. Seeds will fall into the bag as they dry.

Store dried seeds in a sealed container for cooking or replanting.

Common Problems + Quick Fixes

Bolting too fast:

Cause: Heat, long days, or transplant stress.

Action: This is normal for cilantro. Plant during cooler seasons, provide afternoon shade, keep soil cool with mulch, and use succession planting for continued harvest.

Seeds didn't sprout:

Cause: Seeds planted too deep, soil drying out, or old seed.

Action: Plant only 1/4–1/2 inch deep and keep soil evenly moist. Soaking seeds before planting can help speed germination.

Yellowing leaves or sticky residue (aphids):

Cause: Aphids feeding on stems and leaf undersides.

Action: Rinse off with a strong spray of water and remove heavily affected leaves.

Powdery white spots on leaves:

Cause: Powdery mildew, favored by humidity and poor airflow.

Action: Thin plants for better air circulation, water at the soil level, and remove affected leaves.

Leaf spots (brown or black):

Cause: Bacterial leaf spot, often associated with wet conditions or overhead watering.

Action: Remove infected plants and avoid wetting leaves. Rotate crops the following year.

Quick Tips

- Direct sow only—cilantro does not transplant well.
- Use succession planting every 2–3 weeks for a steady leaf supply.
- Bolting is part of the plant's life cycle. Let it flower and harvest coriander seeds.
- Mulch helps keep soil cool and extend leaf production in warm weather.

Mini Checklist

- Planted during cool weather (spring or fall)
- Seeds planted 1/4–1/2 inch deep
- Soil kept moist until seedlings emerged
- Seedlings thinned to 2–4 inches apart
- Leaves harvested once plants reached 6 inches tall
- Top growth cut to encourage bushier plants
- Watched for bolting as temperatures warmed
- Allowed some plants to flower for coriander seed harvest

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Mammoth Long Island Dill



AT A GLANCE

SUN

Full Sun (6–8 hours)

DAYS TO GERMINATION

7–14 Days

PLANTING DEPTH

1/4 inch

DAYS TO MATURITY

40–90 Days

SPACING

12–18 inches

Why This Is Easy

Fast and forgiving: Dill grows quickly with minimal care. Direct sow, water as needed, and harvest—an excellent herb for beginners.

Double harvest: You can enjoy fresh, feathery leaves first, then allow plants to flower and collect seeds for pickling and seasoning, all from the same planting.

Planting Specs (Depth + Spacing)

- **Depth:** 1/4 inch (dill seeds need some light to germinate, so avoid planting too deep)
- **Spacing:** Thin seedlings to 6–12 inches apart.

Timeline (What to Expect)

- **Sprout window:** 10–21 days (germination can be slow—be patient)
- **When to thin:** When seedlings are 2–3 inches tall
- **First leaf harvest:** 40–50 days, once plants reach 6–8 inches tall
- **Seed harvest:** 70–90 days, after flowers fade and seeds turn brown
- **Bolting note:** Dill flowers quickly in hot weather. This is normal—harvest leaves early, then allow the plant to set seed.

When to Plant

Dill is a cool-weather herb that bolts in heat and performs best in spring and fall.

Spring: Plant after the last frost once soil has warmed to at least 60°F. This is the primary planting window.

Summer: Dill bolts quickly in hot weather. Summer plantings usually provide a short leaf harvest before flowering.

Fall: In mild climates, plant in late summer for a fall harvest. Dill tolerates light frost.

Succession planting: For a steady supply of fresh leaves, sow new seeds every 2–3 weeks through spring and into early summer.

How to Plant

Direct sowing is strongly recommended, as dill has a taproot and does not transplant well.

Prepare: Choose a sunny location with well-draining soil. Dill is adaptable but benefits from compost mixed into the soil.

Sow: Scatter seeds about 1 inch apart and cover with approximately 1/4 inch of soil. Do not bury seeds deeply.

Water: Water gently after planting and keep soil moist, not soggy, until sprouts appear.

Thin: When seedlings reach 2–3 inches tall, thin to 6–12 inches apart. Crowded plants are more prone to disease.

Rows: Space rows 12–18 inches apart.

Care Made Simple

Watering Logic

Check-First Watering: Dill prefers consistent moisture but does not tolerate wet soil.

If soil feels dry → Water deeply.

If damp → Wait.

Tip: Once established, dill is fairly drought-tolerant. Allow soil to dry slightly between waterings rather than overwatering.

Sun & Shade

Sun & Heat:

Full sun (6–8 hours daily) is ideal.

In hot climates, light afternoon shade can help delay bolting.

When temperatures remain above 75–80°F, bolting is expected. Flowers can be enjoyed and seeds harvested.

Feeding (if applicable)

Feeding: Dill requires minimal fertilization. One or two light feedings during the season are sufficient. Excess fertilizer can reduce flavor.

Staking (if needed): Mammoth Long Island dill can reach 3–5 feet tall. In windy areas, provide support with stakes or plant near a fence.

Harvest (Keep It Producing)

Leaves (Dill Weed):

Begin harvesting when plants are 6–8 inches tall.

Snip leaves as needed. Flavor is best before flowering.

Regular harvesting encourages bushier growth and can delay bolting.

Once a thick central stalk forms and flowering begins, leaf quality declines.

Flowers:

Dill flowers are edible and commonly used in pickling.

Yellow flower clusters attract beneficial insects.

Seeds:

Allow plants to flower fully. After blooms fade, green seeds will form.

Wait until seeds turn brown.

Cut seed heads and place them upside down in a paper bag to dry for 1–2 weeks.

Seeds will drop into the bag as they dry.

Store dried seeds in a sealed container for cooking, pickling, or replanting.

Common Problems + Quick Fixes

Seeds didn't sprout:

Cause: Seeds planted too deep, soil dried out, or old seed.

Action: Plant only 1/4 inch deep and keep soil consistently moist. Germination can take up to 3 weeks.

Bolting too fast:

Cause: Heat stress or long days.

Action: This is normal. Plant early in spring or again in fall. Use succession planting and harvest leaves early. Allow bolted plants to flower and set seed.

Aphids:

Cause: Aphids cluster on stems and leaves.

Action: Dill flowers attract ladybugs that often control aphids naturally. If needed, spray aphids off with water or use insecticidal soap.

Caterpillars (parsleyworms/swallowtail larvae):

Cause: Black swallowtail butterflies lay eggs on dill.

Action: These caterpillars become butterflies. If possible, leave them undisturbed. Otherwise, hand-pick and relocate. Planting extra dill helps share the crop.

Powdery mildew:

Cause: Fungal disease encouraged by humidity and poor air circulation.

Action: Thin plants for airflow, water at the soil level, and remove affected leaves.

Plants falling over:

Cause: Tall growth combined with wind or rain.

Action: Stake plants or grow them near a fence. Choose a sheltered location when possible.

Quick Tips

- Direct sow only—dill does not transplant well.
- Succession plant every 2–3 weeks for continuous leaf harvest.
- Plant seeds shallowly, as light aids germination.
- Bolting is part of the life cycle—use flowers and seeds rather than viewing it as a failure.

Mini Checklist

- Planted after last frost once soil reached 60°F
- Seeds planted 1/4 inch deep
- Soil kept moist until seedlings emerged
- Seedlings thinned to 6–12 inches apart
- Leaves harvested once plants reached 6 inches tall
- Regular cutting done to delay bolting
- Tall plants staked if needed
- Some plants allowed to flower for seed harvest

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