

PARSLEY

Flat Leaf Parsley, Italian Parsley, Curly Parsley, Continental Parsley

Petroselinum crispum

Apiaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

Parsley is native to southern Europe and is now grown in all temperate areas of the world and some tropical areas with cool seasons. The Romans began using parsley as early as 3rd century BC. Its oldest uses were medicinal, fresh or in lotions as first aid for insect bites, as a mosquito repellent, a mild laxative, diuretic and treatment for infections of the eye, ears and teeth. Chewing on fresh Parsley can cleanse the mouth and counteract the smell of strong garlic dishes. In temperate regions, Parsley is a biennial, putting on vegetative growth the first season, over-wintering, then flowering the following season. In tropical regions it will not flower or produce seeds. It is commonly used as a garnish or added to cooked dishes for color, flavor and nutrition. It is one of the most widely used herbs in America.

Cultivation

Parsley seeds are small and slow to germinate, 7-15 days or longer. Seeds should be soaked in water overnight, planted in humus-rich soil, well watered and in the tropics, shaded from heavy rains and summer sun. Parsley can be planted in the cool seasons, at the end of the rains or in the plains areas before cool weather begins. Seeds may be started indoors then transplanted to the field at 30 cm (1 ft) apart. To over-winter, after a heavy frost, cover the plants with mulch.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves should be harvested often to encourage new growth. Fresh leaves may be stored in a cool area with the stems in water or wrapped in moist toweling. Drying the leaves and storing in an air-tight container away from moisture and light, greatly increases the storage time. When seeds turn brown on the plant, the mature ones may be shaken off over a basin or the whole plant may be cut and kept in a dry place for one week to cure. Even under the best conditions, cool, dry and dark, Parsley seeds will not store more than two years so it is best to harvest seeds yearly.

Pests and Diseases

Parsley plants are very susceptible to root-knot nematodes and then to secondary infections of gall rot and root rot.

Cooking and Nutrition

Parsley is very rich in vitamin A, C, iron, iodine, magnesium and various minerals. The flat-leaf varieties are more flavorful for use in cooking, the curly-leaf varieties are common garnishes. *Aethusa cynapium*, (fool's parsley) is a wild variety that should not be confused with edible Parsley.

References

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=276060&isprofile=0&letter=P>