

Herb of the Year 2021: Parsley

Petroselinum crispum

Description

Frost-hardy Biennial with triangular 3-pinnate leaves and a stout taproot that grows 1-2' high. The leaves are curled at the edges. It is widely used it's first year, but the leaves and stems become tough the second, and produce yellow-green flowers. Because of this it is more often grown as an annual.

P.c. 'Italian' is a related species, and is also known as French or Flat-leaf Parsley. It is a larger plant, growing 32-36" high and has smooth uncurled leaves.

Another interesting related species is *P.c. var. tuberosum*, also known as Hamburg parsley. This type has small flat leaves with celery-like flavor. It also has large roots which are eaten as a vegetable.



History

Petroselinum comes from the Greek name *petros selinon*, given to the herb by Dioscorides. It was associated with death and funerals by the Greeks. They also fed it to their horses. It was the Romans that started to use it as a major culinary herb.



Habitat

Native to the Mediterranean region of Europe where it is found growing wild in fields and on rocky slopes. Because of its popularity it is now widely grown in many countries.

Uses

Medicinal: Parsley is rich in Vitamins A, C and Iron, and is an antioxidant. It also contains a flavonoid apigenin which acts as an antiallergen. It is a natural breath freshener when chewed.

Culinary: Used in a wide variety of dishes such as sauces, salads, dressings, savory butters, stuffings, and garnishes for meats and fish. The essential oil is used in commercial food products.

Growth

Parsley needs rich, moist, well-drained soil, and prefers full sun, but can tolerate partial shade. If sown from seed, the soil needs to be warmed up, or germination will be slow. Best results can be achieved by planting young plants that have been started indoors, and then have been hardened off.



Parts Used

Leaves and Stems are both used. They are best when fresh or frozen. Dried parsley loses its flavor. The roots of the Hamburg variety are also eaten.

FYI

Parsley is a favorite food of the swallowtail butterfly caterpillar, so plant enough for you and them.

Flat-leaf varieties should not be confused with *Aethusa cynapium*, also known as "Fool's Parsley" which is a highly poisonous wild plant.

