

# SFA

*Seeds for Africa*

## Flat Leaf Parsley

Start your parsley plants from seed using a seed tray. This works best for starting your plants indoors. Keep the soil moist and the tray in a warm place. Parsley seeds take six to eight weeks to germinate, so be patient. If you live in a warmer climate with no threat of frost, you can plant directly into the soil in early spring. But, as mentioned above, the soil does need to be warm. Plant the seeds no more than one inch deep and ten inches apart. Just as in using a seed tray, germination can take up to eight weeks.

Realize parsley prefers cooler weather but not cold. If you start your seedlings indoors mid-winter, you can have seedlings by early spring. But don't plant the seedlings in cold soil. Also, don't plant them if there is still the possibility of frost.

Plant your seedlings once the threat of frost is past. Parsley plants do well in full sun but can thrive in partial shade. Plant your seedlings 10 to 12 inches apart.

Fertilize your seedlings seven to ten days after planting. A feeding of nitrogen promotes abundant leaf growth. Do not over-fertilize or feed too close to the plant base; nitrogen can burn the tender roots.

Harvest the outer stems and leaves as your plant grows. Using a garden clipper, clip the stems close to the base. Parsley grows from the center outward, so harvest the outer leaves. This is the mature growth, and these leaves will have the most flavor. Continually harvest from your plants to promote new growth. The stems can be eaten as well as the leaves, though they do not have as much flavor or nutrients as the leaves. If you don't want the stems, toss them into the compost.

Know that parsley prefers consistently moist soil. Too little water and the leaves will begin to brown around the edges and new growth will wilt.

Recognize that toward the end of summer, parsley will begin to bolt, or go to seed. From the center will grow tall stems bearing lacy, round flowers. You can cut these back and continue to harvest or let the plant go to seed, allowing the plants to self-propagate. Once Italian parsley has bolted, however, leaf growth is likely to slow down and leaves may become bitter tasting. Though parsley is considered biannual, the second season is usually disappointing. This is assuming your plants survive the winter. In colder climates, they usually do not.

Dried Italian parsley. Dry your parsley. Because you harvest parsley throughout the season, you're very likely to have a lot of it. Dried Italian parsley can be kept up to six months in an airtight container in your pantry. The flavor of dried parsley is very bright and fresh; use it for your soups and stews, on salads and for teas.

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