

# SFA

*Seeds for Africa*

## Parsley Curly - *Petroselinum Crispum*

Here's how to grow parsley - indoors and out. Here we are talking about *Petroselinum crispum*, the curly leaf kind so much in evidence at buffet lunches.

People often think that growing parsley is difficult; what is difficult is that germination can be fitful and exceptionally slow. But this really is just an exercise in patience. Don't make the mistake of chucking out the contents of the seed tray and starting again before you have waited at least 6 weeks!

Most parsley will start to germinate in about three weeks but new seedlings may still keep appearing weeks later.

You can sow parsley directly in the soil.

Parsley has quite deep roots so it is not so easy to transplant successfully. Starting them off in a seed tray makes it easy not to lose them and to check that they are germinating.

For sowing parsley in a seed tray follow the guidelines given below for planting parsley in a pot.

If your garden area is nice and tidy and you like things in straight rows, parsley seedlings can do well sown straight into the place they are going to grow.

Parsley likes a warm, sunny space which is not too dry. The soil should be rich and free-draining, ideally.

You can sow parsley in mid spring or late summer.

Parsley needs to be sown every year for best results. The plant is a biennial (lives for two years) but in its second year it is mainly interested in producing seeds, so the leaves are fewer and the plant becomes more stringy and tall.

You can keep a few plants for seeds for next year. Parsley also self-seeds quite easily, so you can find a new crop growing around a previous year's plant. However, this is not a very reliable way of making sure that you have enough growing parsley for your current needs.

#### **HERES HOW TO GROW PARSLEY IN ROWS OUTSIDE:**

Prepare the soil as for most crops until you have a fine tilth and there are no weeds or big stones. Rake the surface to break up clumps of soil.

Draw a row with the edge of a hoe or the tip of a trowel. It should be about 1/2 inch deep (approx 1 cm). Water the soil to make it good and damp - but not flooded!

Pinch up the seeds between thumb and forefinger and thinly sow them. Pull fine soil over them so that they are well covered and firm down the soil with your hand or foot. If you are using your feet be careful not to compact the soil too much.

If you want more than one row, put it about 1 foot away (30cm) so that the adult plants have plenty of space.

When the seedlings are well established thin the crop so that each plant is about 8 inches (15 cm approx) from its neighbour. You can do this in stages if you prefer. Always water after thinning to help minimise stress and root disturbance.

Add a little mulch of well-rotted compost when convenient to keep your parsley crop growing well.

#### **HOW TO SOW PARSLEY IN A POT:**

You can easily grow parsley in a pot for keeping indoors or on a balcony. For a plant with fairly deep roots it does surprisingly well in shallow pots.

Pre-soak the seed for a day before planting.

Choose a reasonably deep and wide pot, say 10 inches across, 6 inches deep. Add some broken crocks or small pebbles to aid drainage. Add good quality organic potting compost to about 1 inch from the top of the pot. Scatter the damp seeds thinly across the surface of the compost. Cover them with another 1/2 inch or so of compost and gently firm everything down.

Gently water the pot until the compost is moist.

Keep the pot covered to reduce moisture loss for a couple of weeks. Keep the compost nice and moist at all times but don't overdo it as your seeds can rot.

Once the seedling start to appear keep the pot somewhere light. If you are growing the seedlings on a windowsill you will need to turn the pot every couple of days to prevent seedlings leaning towards the sun.

Make sure that the compost never completely dries out.

Once the plants are established you can harvest leaves using a sharp pair of scissors - or just nip off selected leaves with your fingers. Be careful not to dislodge the plant from its soil if you do use fingers.

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