

# How to Make Perfect Pesto Every Time

## Ingredients

- 5 to 6 ounces (2 healthy bunches or about 6 cups gently packed) basil leaves, or any other green
- 1/2 cup pine nuts, or any other nut
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, or any other hard cheese
- 1 to 2 garlic cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

**Blend half the basil with the nuts, cheese, and garlic:** Combine half of the basil with the nuts, cheese, cloves, and salt in a blender or food processor. Blend continuously until the ingredients are finely chopped.

**Blend in the rest of the basil:** Scrape down the sides of the bowl and add the rest of the basil. Blend until a uniform paste has formed. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

**Stream in the olive oil:** With the blender running, stream in the olive oil. Less olive oil will make a paste good for spreading on sandwiches and pizzas; more will make a sauce better for pastas and stirring into soup. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and continue blending as needed until the olive oil is emulsified into the basil and the pesto looks uniform.

**Taste and adjust:** Taste the pesto and add more salt, garlic, nuts, or cheese as needed to taste.

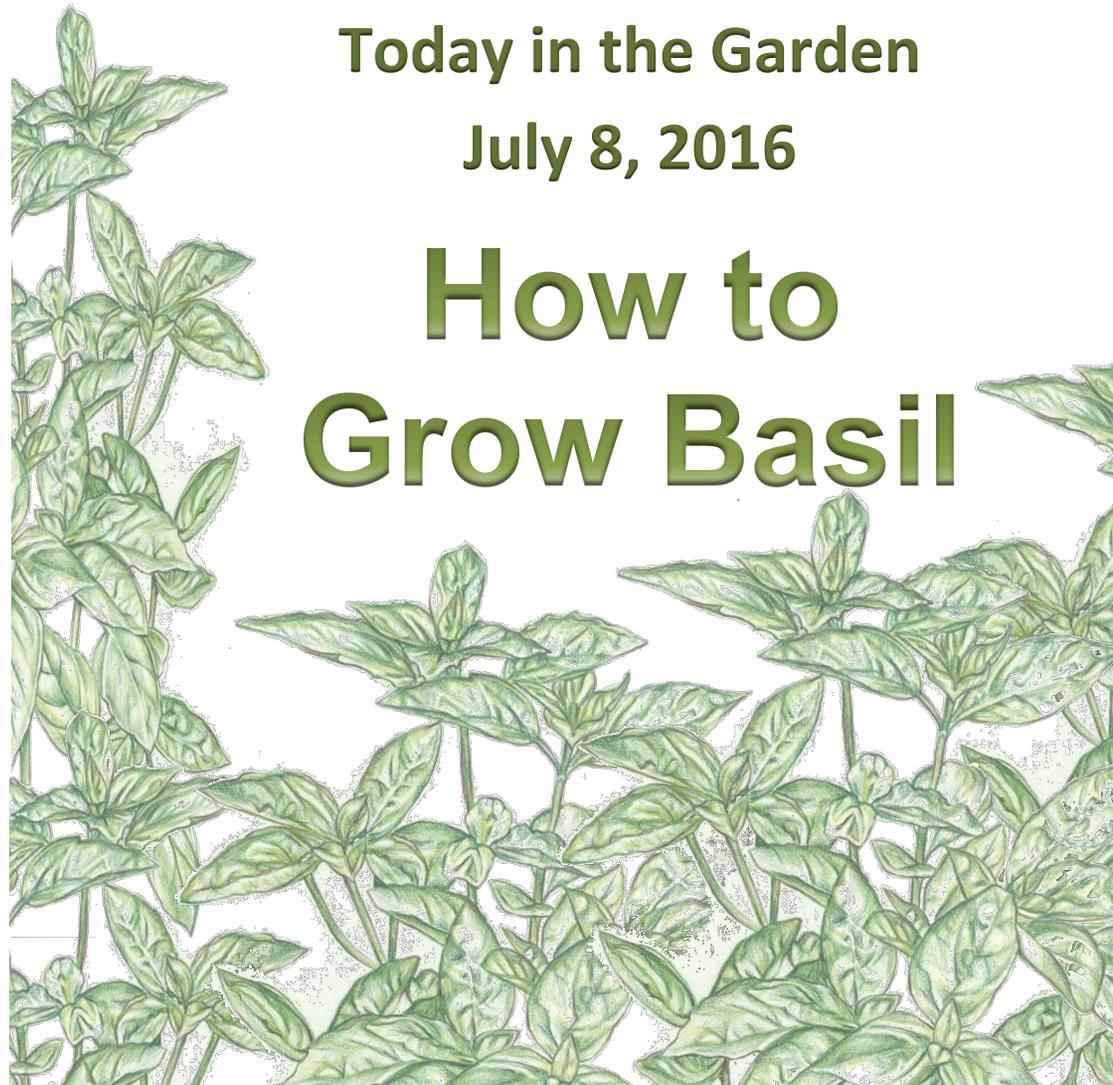
**Store your pesto:** Pesto will darken and brown very quickly, but will still be tasty and fresh for several days. For best appearance, use it right away. If storing, store it in the smallest container possible and thoroughly press the pesto to eliminate air pockets. Pour a little olive oil over the surface, cover, and refrigerate for up to a week. Pesto can also be frozen for several months.

<http://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-make-perfect-pesto-every-time>



Today in the Garden  
July 8, 2016

How to  
Grow Basil



## HOW TO GROW BASIL

Basil is a tropical like plant that likes warm or hot weather. Basil can grow anywhere from 1-2 ft high and needs ample space to grow properly. Be sure to check the spacing on the back of the seed packet or plant info card to see how to space your variety appropriately.

Basil grows well in gardens and in pots. If growing in pots, I recommend buying foam pots so that it holds moisture longer. Basil likes well drained soil so make sure that there are holes in the bottom of your pots so that it can drain properly.

Plant basil outdoors when there is no chance of a frost or freeze. Basil will bruise easily and if you plant when it is too cool it can easily damage your plant. Basil should be planted in full sun and in well-drained soil that is enriched with quality compost. Water basil regularly and mulch as needed to retain moisture in the soil.

## PRUNING BASIL

It is best to prune basil regularly to create a bushy plant. See picture below to see the difference of a pruned plant and a basil plant not pruned.

Basil can be grown throughout the summer season and into the fall if you prune regularly. When your basil plant starts to become woody (picture below), cut the plant all the way down to about 2-3 inches of the plant. Just make sure to leave at least 2 leaves on the stems.

You will be amazed how quickly your pruned basil plant will grow back and it will grow back fuller and bushier.

## PINCHING BACK FLOWER HEADS

It is important to also pinch back the flower heads of basil plants. Here is what a flower head looks like. In a few days this flower head would most likely have little white flowers.

To pinch back simply snap the stem off in between your two fingers. It should snap off really easily. Remove all flower heads as they appear so that the plant's energy is focused on producing healthy leaves and not producing flowers.

## HARVESTING BASIL

When your plant is large enough to start harvesting, you simply remove the top of the plant as pictured below.

Snap the plant at the top of the stem and then remove the leaves from the stem and put the leaves in your favorite salad/dish or you could cook or make your favorite sauce with your basil leaves.

Remember the basil plant will continue to grow and you will be encouraging new growth as you harvest your plant so harvest regularly to create a healthy plant.

Source:

<http://wholielifestylenutrition.com/gardening/grow-basil/>

