

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Parsley Part II

April 16, 2008

Today's article comes as a follow-up to some questions asked by readers after reading last week's article about parsley.

The question was how to grow parsley in your yard. The following is from The School of Natural Healing's 100-Herb Syllabus:

"The best type of soil for Parsley is a fertile humus with good moisture holding capacity. Well-rotted compost is excellent for fertilizer, worked into the soil with a hoe or by roto-tilling. Avoid manure however as this attracts flies and could result in an infestation of maggots.

You can sow Parsley as early as February although it takes as much as a month to germinate in cold conditions. The largest sowing is usually done in April and this provides lots of plant material for late-summer gathering. You can sow in August for plants to be taken indoors or to be put into cold frames for winter use. An even broadcast sowing is preferred and the ground can be raked smooth and then lightly trodden to keep the seed in place during the often long germination period. The seed should be only slightly covered, not more than 1/4 inch deep. Be sure that your young chickens don't scratch out your seed (ours did). It is generally said that you mustn't disturb Parsley once it is sown but we have transplanted it and it really can be done with ease. You can also thin plants if desired. A well-grown plant will cover a foot in area. Keep your plants well watered, as the hot summer sun can dry them right up. Be sure to keep the area free of weeds especially at first. Later, when the plants are well-established you can apply a hay or straw mulch to conserve moisture and keep the weeds down.

Parsley is primarily used fresh and you can pick it every day when the plant is mature. It is a biannual which means that it will make good growth the first year and then die back with the frost. The second year it makes spectacular growth and can be used freely in the spring if it is growing in a sheltered place. However, it quickly goes to seed which can be avoided by cutting the plants back as soon as they seem to begin to shoot. You can cut the plants back if their growth gets coarse

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as well, watering well afterwards to encourage much fine growth after. We like planting Parsley in a sheltered place in the fall to enjoy an early-spring growth.

The harvested plant to be dried should be placed on screens and quickly dried in an airy, warm place. Oven-drying may be necessary to complete the process. Sometimes the herb loses a little of its intense green color during the drying process but the flavor and nutritional value should remain the same. Home-grown and dried Parsley is much preferable to the store-bought type which is quite expensive and might have been grown with chemicals.

You can use the dried Parsley freely as you would the minced fresh Parsley.

The curly-leaved Parsley is generally preferred in gardens. It is also preferred because Fool's Parsley, which looks a lot like plain-leaved Parsley but which is extremely poisonous, can be mistaken for it. The Fool's Parsley however doesn't smell like genuine Parsley and doesn't taste like it, either, should a person dare to try it. However, plain-leaved Parsley winters better than the curly-leaf variety. We live in a rather severe climate, yet our Parsley plants sheltered in a moist place by the side of our house put out new shoots during warm spells in the wintertime!"