

Growing Parsley

Lancaster County

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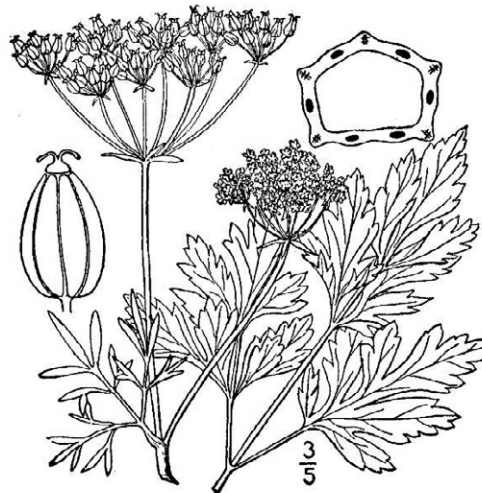
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Parsley, (*Petroselinum crispum*) a member of the carrot family, is a lot more than a decorative green leaf on the side of a restaurant plate. In fact, it is one of the most nutritious of all herbs. An excellent source of vitamins A and C.

Parsley leaves are comprised of three leaflets on short stems, that branch in threes at the tips of eight inch long bare stalks. Leaves of common parsley are dark green with divided tips which curl tightly. Those of Italian parsley are a lighter green and more deeply divided and feathery, resembling celery foliage. A common parsley plant typically grows 9 to 18 inches tall and spreads about 6 to 9 inches.

Although parsley is a biennial, it is usually treated as an annual and is pulled up at the end of the first season. That is why its flowers, which appear in early summer of its second year, are seldom seen. They are flat clusters composed of tiny, greenish yellow florets, and resemble Queen Anne's lace. As with most herbs, flowering tends to



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown, 1913. Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada, Vol. 2: 642.

make the foliage bitter and less useful for cooking.

Parsley grows best in full sun. The ideal soil is moderately rich, moist and well drained. To direct sow seeds in rows, trace a shallow indentation in the soil with a stick or pencil to guide planting. Then sow the seeds by dribbling them through your thumb and forefinger into the indented

rows. Plant seeds a half inch deep. Parsley is very slow to germinate. After 3 or 4 weeks, when sprouts are a few inches tall and show their first true leaves, thin them to allow 8 to 10 inches of space between the remaining ones so they can grow freely.

Young parsley plants need regular watering until they become established. Spread one to two inches of mulch, such as grass clippings or chopped leaves on the soil around parsley plants when they are about 6 inches tall. This mulch helps the soil retain moisture and discourages weeds.

Begin harvesting parsley when it produces leaf stems with three segments. Harvest the larger leaves at the outside of the plant first, leaving the new, interior shoots to mature. Store freshly picked leaves in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for 2 weeks. Parsley also dries well. Store dried parsley in an air-tight jar for up to a year. (MJF)