

Belle Vie

Gardens & Nursery

July 2003 Newsletter

Summer is here . . .

. . . with a vengeance, if these past few late June & early July days are anything to go by. We have planted in our U-Pick field a few of each of the different varieties of vegetables that we offered for sale in 4-inch pots. If you were interested in trying a different variety, but didn't have room for it in your own garden--come on out to the U-Pick and sample from our "garden". The Italiano Largo and Magda squash are beginning to produce, as well as beans and cucumbers. Also still hanging in there is some wonderful broccoli, a variety called "Calabrese". We love it in stir-frys. Tomatoes should be starting to ripen by mid-month.

We have decided to take a "mid-season" mini break so we will close for the first week in July and will resume our regular hours Thursday, July 10th. Hope you have a happy and safe Independence Day holiday.

❖ **Garden Hours: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**Thursdays & Fridays
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

**Saturdays (July 12, 19 & 26)
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
(at the Farmers' Market)
1:30 PM to 4:00 PM
(at Belle Vie Gardens)**

See other side for
a few wonderful
basil recipes

Topic of the Month: BASIL (the ultimate summer herb)

As with many herbs, folklore abounds and basil was both feared and revered through the ages. In the 17th century, people believed that bruising or wringing basil leaves would breed scorpions. In Italy, basil was a sign of love and when a girl put a pot of basil outside her room, it meant she was ready to receive her suitor. In Roman times, the name referred to the fire-breathing dragon, *Basileuscus*, and was used as a charm against it. Could be some truth to it, since even now basil is used externally for snakebite and insect stings.

Today it is one of our most favorite culinary herbs. No wonder The International Herb Association has named Basil as the Herb of the Year for 2003! There are over 100 varieties of basil each with varying combinations of their key aromas and flavors: anise, cinnamon, clove, lemon, rose, thyme, mint, and camphor.

Most of the sweet basils we know like, 'Sweet', 'Genovese' and 'Italian Pesto' have subtle hints of clove, anise, and mint. A variety we added this year, 'Porfuma Di Genoa', is said to have the purest basil flavor without minty/clove overtones. 'Lettuce Leaf' has large serrated leaves and 'Mammoth' has extra large leaves and is sometimes called "the wrapping basil". Even if you don't have a garden, there is a basil for you: 'Windowbox Mini' and 'Finissimo Verde A Palla' are small in size (but not taste) and make wonderful container plants. Looking for a little color in your garden (as well as your salads)? How about the purple varieties? 'Swiss Sunset', 'Purple Ruffles' and 'Rubin' add a wonderful opalescence to the garden. 'Cinnamon', Thai 'Siam Queen', Lemon 'Mrs. Burns', and East Indian (*Ocimum gratissimum*) are interesting for flavor, aroma & flowers. So you see, there is a flavor, aroma, shape and size to suit everyone.

Happy Gardening (and Good Eating),
Donna Ahern and Kathy Nolan

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Basil Tomatoes

4	large tomatoes	1	clove garlic, crushed
2 tsp	butter	2 Tbsp	grated Parmesan
1 Tbsp	chopped fresh basil		salt & pepper to taste

Cut the tomatoes in half horizontally and place in a shallow baking dish. Mix the butter with the basil, garlic, salt, pepper, and Parmesan. Spread the mixture over the cut side of each tomato. Broil under medium heat for about 5 minutes or until the topping is just turning golden brown.

Thai Chicken Stir-Fry

1/2 Tbsp	cornstarch
1/4 cup	water
2	boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced into strips
1 small	yellow onion, sliced
1 clove	garlic, sliced
1 tsp	Thai pepper (or more to your heat tolerance), chopped
1 Tbsp	fish sauce
1 Tbsp	oyster sauce
1/4 cup	chicken stock
1 small	red sweet pepper, thinly sliced
1 cup	fresh Thai basil
	Vegetable oil (1 to 3 Tbsp)

Mix the cornstarch and water in a medium bowl. Add the chicken and mix to coat all pieces. Set aside. Heat the oil over high heat. When hot, add the onion, garlic, and Thai pepper. Stir until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add the chicken and stir until the chicken is white, about 4-5 minutes. Add the fish sauce, oyster sauce, and chicken stock. Continue cooking until the chicken is done, 4 to 5 additional minutes. Add the sweet red pepper and Thai basil and remove from heat. Serve with steamed rice.

East Indian Basil Tea

Spicy, with a hint of cloves. Pour boiling water over a handful of fresh East Indian basil leaves and let steep for 5 minutes. Add honey or sweet Stevia leaves, if desired.