



# Parsley

## *Petroselinum* species

Parsley is the 2021 International Herb of the Year; there are 3 main species in cultivation: Curley Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), Italian Parsley (*Petroselinum hortense filicinum*) and Hamburg or Turnip rooted Parsley (*Petroselinum sativum*). It belongs to the Apiaceae (formerly Umbelliferae) family and it is possibly the most well known and used herb in the world. Apart from being a wonderful culinary herb, Parsley is well known as a diuretic and kidney tonic and very nutritious food, so much more than just a garnish.

(Curley Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum*: Karina Hilterman)

**Cultivation:** Parsley is considered to be a biennial, growing for two years before flowering, setting seed and dying. In hot climates it usually grows as an annual.

It grows best in moist, free draining soil, in full sun. Make sure you start picking from the plants as they grow, as this will stimulate even more growth, ensuring a good supply through the year.

If it gets too hot and dry it will bolt off to seed. Leave the seed to ripen and make sure you scatter it freely to make sure you have a continuing germination of new plants.

Hamburg parsley looks and tastes like flat-leaf parsley above ground, with a bonus, it also grows a thick edible root, which is similar to a parsnip. The tops can be harvested and used from young; the roots can be harvested after about 3 months. Dig up with a fork, shake off the soil and enjoy, or store, as you would carrots or parsnips.

**Companion planting:** As aphids are not too fond of Parsley it's a good idea to grow it near plants that they do; e.g. roses and asparagus, also tomatoes. It's considered to improve the taste of vegetables. Apart from using Parsley for cooking, you will be glad you planted those extra plants in the rose garden. Chives, also prone to aphid attack, like growing near Parsley; when it flowers, it will attract bees and butterflies to feed. Parsley and mint don't grow well together.

(Parsley flowers: Karina Hilterman)

**Energetic Character:** Warm, drying, slightly pungent, slightly sweet.

**Constituents:** Carotenoids, flavonoids, amino acids, volatile oils, Vitamins; A, B's, C, K, folate. Minerals; calcium, iron, potassium, sodium, magnesium, manganese, copper, phosphorus and selenium and zinc.

**Therapeutic actions:** Antioxidant, diuretic, nutritive, anti-anaemia carminative, anti-rheumatic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and generally has a protective effect on the body, especially the kidneys.

*"The sede (of parsley) taken before hand helpeth men that have weyke braynes to beare drinke better."*

William Turner (?1508–1568), English Physician, Herbalist and Reformer.

**Parts Used:** the whole plant can be used, though it is more usually the stems and leaves.

If you have a surplus of this herb or you want to have an assured supply, then simply harvest it, wash if needed, towel dry surplus water, place it a plastic bag, suck out surplus air and put in the freezer - when frozen, it's really brittle, so just squeeze the bag and voila chopped herbs! There is less chance of them oxidizing, therefore deteriorating, this way too. This method can be used for other herbs, especially seasonal ones.

**Medicinal uses:** Parsley has one of the highest levels of antioxidant activities of any herb—that means it has 'protective effects' on your body and can assist to inhibit 'age-related' degenerative conditions. The seeds are strongly diuretic and are often used as 'anti-rheumatic'. The roots are also strongly diuretic as well. If you use a lot of Parsley and other 'diuretic or stimulating' herbs or medicines it is very important to make sure you drink plenty of water, to reduce the stress on your kidneys and to reduce to risk of developing kidney stones.



Also ensure that your electrolyte balance is not ‘imbalanced’ by the diuretic action, particularly potassium which assist to keep your blood pressure regulated. Eat lots of fresh Dandelion leaves with your Parsley!

*“Parsley be also delightful to the taste and agreeable to the stomacke.”* – John Gerard (1545-1612), English Herbalist

**Dosage:** Eat up to 25 grams of fresh Parsley leaves daily (Eat half this amount during pregnancy).

☸ **Caution:** *Use with care, for people with kidney disease, especially when consuming Parsley seeds.*

**Culinary Uses:** Parsley is one of the most recognized of culinary herbs. As to which type (either flat or curly leaved) is best to use, is a matter of personal choice. Some people prefer the curly leaves; some prefer the softer, smoother leaves of the Italian variety. It can be added to most savory dishes and to keep the colour bright, add just before serving the dish. Creamy mashed potatoes with lots of Parsley; try mashed kumara or pumpkin for a change; add some freshly grated nutmeg to make the dish taste amazing. Sprinkle over soups, stews, or casseroles too. It can be used to make pesto, in place of basil, this is particularly useful in winter when you want the ‘pesto taste and basil is long gone to seed and died off. Use your usual pesto recipe and substitute Parsley for the basil quantity. Of course, it is essential to tabbouleh.

Try making **Parsley Jelly**; 450 grams of coarsely chopped Parsley, press down into a pot and just cover with water, bring to the boil, then simmer for 1 hour. Add the juice of 2 lemons and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain through muslin. Into a pot for each cup of juice add 1 cup of sugar and bring to the boil, then simmer until it reaches setting point when tested. This condiment is jewel like and is excellent served with cold meats, and charcuterie.

*(Italian Parsley: Sara Lowe)*



**Root/Hamburg Parsley** is an ingredient common to cuisines from Central and Eastern Europe, where it is used in a variety of ways; soups, casseroles and stews or grated or sliced into salads. It has a stronger a more aromatic taste than Parsley leaves.

*“Parsley - the jewel of herbs, both in the pot and on the plate.”* – Albert Stockli (1918-1972), Swiss born U.S. Chef-Writer

*(Hamburg Parsley roots: Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds/[rareseeds.com](http://rareseeds.com))*

**Some History & Mystery:** Some of the folk names of Parsley are devil's oatmeal, percely, persil, petersilie and roc parsley.

The ascribed Gender is Masculine, the associated Planet is Mercury, its Element is Air, its Deity is Persephone and the Powers ascribed are lust, protection and purification.

The lands of origin of Parsley have been lost in time, as it has been used by many cultures since antiquity. Its Genus name of *Petroselinum* originates from the Greek word ‘petro,’ meaning stone as it freely grows in rocky Greek lands. The legend of Archemorus says that when this hero was killed and eaten by serpents, Parsley sprouted from the ground where his blood was spilled, thus it became associated as a herb for funerals. There were also fears with association around death, which led to the daily ritual of plucking a sprig of Parsley and tucking it into their togas to keep death away; did Julius Caesar do this?

Continuing with using Parsley for protection, it was placed on plates of food to protect it from contamination and ‘sabotage.’ A tradition that continues to this day, though the original intention was lost. The Romans ate it when they were ‘dead drunk’ to cover the smells of alcohol and to assist their challenged digestive systems when feasting. They also used to wear wreaths of Parsley on their head to prevent or lessen the headaches that inevitably follow inebriation. Parsley is used in the Jewish Passover celebrations as a symbol of rebirth and renewal. There’s a folk tale that says if Parsley is planted by the ‘lady of the house’, she will become pregnant in the near future; cheaper, quicker and less stressful than IVF!

This herb has much tradition and superstition surrounding it, in spite of it all, enjoy this wonderful herb and all the health benefits it can bring you.



Prepared for the Herb Federation of New Zealand’s Herb Awareness Week 2021. Enquiries: [www.herbs.org.nz](http://www.herbs.org.nz)

**Advisory Note:** This text is given as a general guidance. If any adverse reactions occur or symptoms persist, please contact a qualified medical herbalist or medical doctor immediately.