

Making Major Money with Minor Crops: Producing Profit on the Edges (all levels)

Basil in Focus

Transplanting: 4 seeds per cell into 98's (or 128's) – Italian Large Leaf, Eleonora, Genovese, + specialty types

Heat is helpful at time of seeding to speed emergence – we only used for 320 seeding in 2015 and only for 1 wk.

3 rows at 6", 9", or 12" (depending on time of year and intention toward harvest). Our earliest successions are set out at 6" spacing and placed under cover – aim is for maximum production for first harvest. Mid-summer plantings are typically set out a 1' to allow for larger plants and improved air circulation.

Multiple Successions – All seeded into 98 cell trays (unless noted) in 2015.

| GH Date | TP Date | Harvest Dates | Crop | S. | Type | Bed Feet | Count | Projected harvests |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| 320 (germ 324 w/heat) | 505, 512 G | | basil | P | ital lg leaf + some purple w/o heat | 60 at 6'' | 3.00 x128 | june |
| 409 | 512 G 515 T | Tops 616 | basil | 1 | ital lg leaf + eleonora trial | 120 | 4.00 | june |
| 503 | 527 A | 703>825 | basil | 2 | ital lg leaf | 240 | 10.00 | july |
| 529 4x128 | 708 J | Aug | basil | 3 | eleonora + ital lg leaf | 80 | 4x128 | late july |
| 619 | 726 R | 819 | basil | 4 | eleonora + ital lg leaf | 240 | 8.00 | late aug |
| 721 | Not TP | None | basil | Trial | Eleonora | 80 | 4 | sept |

In 2016, we'll plan successions w/any set out after July 4th at 6" spacing to minimize bed space loss if crop is a total loss. Ideally late July succession will find space under plastic in a high tunnel... drop to 92 bed feet (1 fh bed)

Cultivation: Basil is cultivated 2-3 times before initial harvest depending on weed pressure. This typically involves 1 hand weeding session. Plants are initially topped (distributed to the CSA or sold at the stand for small bags \$2 or \$2.50) to create bush habit. Beds are "renovated" on an ongoing basis post-harvest to ensure efficiency of future harvest.

Harvest & Yield: Tops on 6/16 – 14' = 9 bags at \$2.50 each by 6/27 - 15' = 1 full orange bushel basket

by 7/11 8' = 1 full basket ... each basket yields 18-24 bags at \$3 each depending on size of bags and amount per basket.

Late season 8/22 small Eleonora before dm arrives – 30' = 30 smaller bags (sold at \$3 b/c of demand)

Market Price: We sell basil for \$3 per bag for standard bags and \$5 for larger "pesto" bags. Occasionally we'll harvest bunches, but we primarily moved toward bagged sales in 2015 to improve post-harvest quality at the stand.

Demand: Basil demand is very high – especially during tomato season. It is a must have when marketing large volumes of tomatoes, typically home gardeners starting from seed won't have basil 'til late July.

Biggest Challenge – Basil Downy Mildew has been present in some capacity since 2010. We currently limit our production of fall basil. Eleonora did allow for 1-2 weeks extended harvest in late August 2015. Commercial release of an improved variety expected 2017 or 2018... haven't cracked oomycetes w/ fertility.

Keys to Profitable Basil: Discussion Point – Characteristics...