

# Sicilian Sunshine® Bay Laurel

*Laurus nobilis*



Grow your own bay leaves! This spice rack staple comes from an easy-to-grow plant that provides you with a supply of fragrant leaves to flavor soups, stews, and a slew of other dishes. Though this Mediterranean native doesn't tolerate cold temperatures, it adapts readily to being grown indoors, so anyone can reap a harvest of this versatile seasoning. **Sicilian Sunshine®** bay laurel shares the intense, sweetly herbal aroma of traditional bay but new foliage emerges a bright glowing gold, giving it genuine star power in the garden or on the windowsill.



## Growing Sweet Bay

**Zone:** Hardy to USDA zone 8, heat tolerant to AHS zone 10

**Exposure:** Full sun (6+ hours a day)

**Height:** 6-10' (1.8-3.0 m) outdoors, 1-6' (0.3-1.8 m) indoors

**Water:** Drought tolerant, especially once established in the landscape.

**Soil:** Tolerant of any soil, so long as it is well-drained.

**Pests:** Scale is sometimes a problem in warm climates.

**Pruning:** Bay is very tolerant of pruning and is frequently used for topiaries and hedges. Prune in spring, just as new growth begins. Pruning is not strictly necessary, unless maintaining shape.

**Fertilizing:** Slow-growing bay laurel benefits from an application of a woody plant fertilizer in spring.

**Harvesting:** Remove leaves from stem with a sharp pair of pruners or snips, taking care to preserve the small secondary bud, which will emerge once the large leaf is cut. Use cut leaves fresh or dry. To dry, simply place individual leaves on a sheet of newspaper in a cool, airy spot for several days. Dried bay leaves last up to two years in airtight containers.

**Growing indoors:** Choose a well-drained container 10-14" in diameter. Pot with fresh potting soil. Site plant in a very bright spot; direct sunlight is best. Thin, spindly growth indicates the plant needs more light. Try to provide cool temperatures, about 55-65°F (12-18°C), especially in winter. Excessive heat can cause stress and rapid drying, while cold temperatures (prolonged periods below 45°F/7.2°C) can cause damage. Keep plant outdoors in summer if possible; sunlight and fresh air encourage growth.

Water when soil becomes dry. Do not over water; the roots of bay laurel cannot withstand soggy soil. Leaves that droop or fall off the plant are signs of drought stress, and soft or blackened foliage can indicate root rot.

Prune or trim as needed to maintain size and shape. Early spring is the best time for heavy pruning and to begin fertilizing as well. Apply a balanced fertilizer once monthly from the time new growth begins until late summer. Bring back indoors before evening temperatures dip to the 40s (4.4°C).