

# Bay Laurel (Culinary)



This plant is the source of several popular herbs and one spice used in a wide variety of recipes, particularly among Mediterranean cuisines. Most commonly, the aromatic leaves are added whole to Italian pasta sauces.

The bay laurel is actually an evergreen shrub or tree native to the Mediterranean area. It has large, pointed oval leaves that are deep, glossy green in color with a leathery texture. Its natural growth habit produces a medium- to large-sized tree with multiple stems that support a dense green pyramidal canopy. But this slow-growing plant willingly accepts heavy pruning, so you will just as often see it appearing as a shrub or container plant kept trimmed into a dense green mass.

The size of potted plants are generally kept to four to six feet tall, while unpruned landscape plants can eventually grow from 30 to 60 feet tall. In the spring, bay laurel has small yellow flowers that develop into dark purple berries in the fall. The bay laurel is dioecious (which means that the plants have specific genders, male or female). Flowers on female plants must be pollinated by a nearby male bay laurel in order to produce berries. Bay Laurel is a slow-growing tree (a few inches per year) that is best planted in the spring.

<b>Mature Size</b>	10–60 ft. tall, 5–20 ft. wide; container plants generally kept pruned to 4–6 ft.
<b>Sun Exposure</b>	Full, partial
<b>Hardiness Zones</b>	8–10 (USDA)
<b>Toxicity</b>	Toxic to dogs, cats, horses