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# Salad Burnet Plant: An Herb Worth Growing!



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# How to Plant, Grow, and Harvest Salad Burnet (Sanguisorba Minor)

By [Lauren Landers](#)

Last Updated: April 28, 2025



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Cool as a cucumber, salad burnet is a tasty, perennial herb with cucumber-flavored leaves and bright red, summer-blooming flowers that appeal to the eye and pollinators. These multi-purpose plants are right at home in flower beds, veggie and herb gardens, and containers, and they're so easy to grow that even “brown thumbs” can keep them happy. If you're looking for [an old-timey herb](#) with excellent flavor and aesthetic charm, here's why salad burnet is worth keeping and simple care tips so you can grow

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# About Salad Burnet Plan ts

Salad burnet is native to the sunny fields and meadows of Europe, northern Africa, and western Asia, but it has become naturalized in many parts of North America since it was introduced by European settlers in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the past, burnet was commonly grown in kitchen gardens and harvested for edible and medicinal use. But while these heirloom herbs aren't as well-known today as plants like basil, they are experiencing a resurgence in popularity thanks to their intriguing cucumber-flavored leaves, which can be used in salads, cocktails, and tea sandwiches!



Garden Burnet is an important medicinal and culinary herb. Credit: Manfred Ruckszio

Like apples and roses, salad burnet belongs to the Rosaceae family, though you wouldn't guess it by looks alone! These tender-stemmed herbs have rounded, fern-like leaves with serrated margins that add texture to garden beds and spherical clusters of red-tinged flowers that attract bees during bloom and birds when they go to seed. Not to mention, salad burnet stays small and grows in compact mounds that rarely stretch over 24 inches high.



Flowering burnet. Credit: Martina Unbehauen

Suitable for vegetable, flower, and herb beds, containers, and garden bed borders,

tolerates mild drought and poor soil, and can even bounce back after moderate deer damage. Perhaps most impressively, salad burnet is winter hardy in zones 4 through 8, and it can live up to 20 years with proper care!

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## PLANTING

Salad burnet is usually grown from seeds, which can be started indoors 6 to 8 weeks before your last spring frost, or outside when the soil is workable. If you're lucky, you may be able to find pre-started burnet plants from local nurseries too. Plants grown from seed usually reach a harvestable size about 70 days after planting, but pre-started plants can be harvested even earlier!

## Indoor Sowing

- Fill up seed starting trays or pots with pre-moistened seed starting mix.
- Lightly press 2 to 3 burnet seeds on top of the soil in each pot or seedling cell and cover them with the lightest dusting of seed starting mix. Burnet seeds need light to germinate and should not be buried deep!
- Move the seeds under grow lights and water them regularly until they sprout, which usually takes 5 to 10 days.
- When the seedlings are a few inches tall and have true leaves, thin out the

seedlings and use them

as microgreens!

- After the last frost date of spring, harden the seedlings for 1 to 2 weeks and then transplant them outside into a well-draining location that receives at least 6 hours of sun per day. If you're growing multiple salad burnet plants together, space your plants at least 12 inches apart.
- If you want to grow salad burnet in pots, use a rich potting mix and well-draining containers at least 8 inches wide!

## Outdoor Sowing

- When the soil is workable, plant salad burnet seeds 2 to 3 inches apart in garden beds or pots. Lightly cover the seeds with no more than 1/8 inch of soil. If you're planting burnet in rows, space the rows at least 18 inches apart.
- Keep the seedlings well-watered until they germinate.
- When the seedlings sprout and are a

plants are spaced 12 inches from their neighbors.

- Add mulch around the base of your plants when they're well-established.

## Pre-Started Plants

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- Transplant burnet plants outdoors or into pots after the last frost date of spring.
- Bury the plant's root ball to the same depth it was growing in its nursery container. Then, firm the soil around the plant's stems.
- Space multiple plants at least 12 inches apart.

## GROWING



*Violet fritillary on a blossoming garden burnet flower. Credit: Peter Schwarz*

Salad burnet is typically grown in herb gardens or pots, but it can be interplanted with vegetables to attract pollinators and beneficial insects or grown in ornamental gardens. You can even grow salad burnet as a microgreen and harvest the tender sprouts just 10 to 15 days after planting. However, if you want burnet to thrive, keep these growing tips in mind!

### Light

Full sun or lightly shaded locations are suitable for salad burnet as long as your

## Water

While salad burnet is relatively drought tolerant, these plants grow best if they receive about 1-inch of water per week.

Avoid watering these plants if the soil still feels damp, and make sure to keep them in well-draining locations. They can develop root rot in water-logged soil!

## Fertilizer

Salad burnet can grow in poor soil, and it doesn't need much fertilizer. If you want to keep your plants as productive as possible, side dress them with compost in spring and apply an organic liquid fertilizer or fish emulsion diluted to half strength every 6 weeks from spring through late summer.

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# Temperature and Humidity

Burnet plants are tolerant of light frost and heat, and they aren't fussy about humidity either. Just make sure your plants are spaced well apart to boost airflow and reduce the risk of fungal issues.

## Seasonal Care

In zones 7 through 8, salad burnet stays evergreen in winter and can be harvested year-round. However, in colder locations, burnet typically dies back to the soil line when cold weather strikes. But it's one of the first plants to regrow in spring!

Salad burnet plants grown in the garden need minimal winter care; however, potted plants, may need to be sunk into the

sure the pots don't break and the roots  
don't freeze.

Removing flower buds and pinching back or harvesting salad burnet stems regularly throughout the growing season keeps plants productive and promotes bushier growth. But if you want your plants to attract pollinators and self-sow, leave the flowers in place.

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## Propagation

Salad burnet plants self-sow readily if you don't remove their dried flowers in fall.

over a paper bag and collect your own burnet seeds for planting.

Although seed propagation is the easiest way to propagate salad burnet, you can also propagate burnet via root division using these simple steps:

- Divide established burnet plants in spring or fall.
  - Don't divide plants more than once every 3 to 5 years. They don't like having their roots disturbed!
  - Carefully dig a circle around the plant's root ball and lift the plant from the soil. Keep the roots as intact as possible.
  - Use garden pruners or a spade to cut the plant into smaller sections. Each section should have at least a few healthy stems and a sturdy nest of roots.
  - Replant the divided plants as soon as possible and bury the plant's roots to the same depth they were growing before you dug them up.
-

## HARVESTING

You can start harvesting salad burnet when the plants are at least 4-inches tall and 70 to 100 days old. When harvesting, start with the outer stems first and cut the stems with a clean cut either at the base of the stem or at a leaf node. Feel free to harvest burnet plants as needed throughout the season, but never take more than 1/3 of your plant's leaves at once.

After harvesting, strip the burnet leaves from the stems and compost the stems. Keep in mind that young burnet leaves have the best flavor, while older leaves can become bitter and tough. Harvesting often encourages plants to produce more tender, new leaves!



## Using Salad Burnet

Salad burnet can be used fresh in any dish that calls for more cucumber flavor, or it can be steeped in oil or vinegar, rolled into herb butter, or frozen for long-term storage. This herb pairs especially well with salads, creamy dishes, eggs, and potatoes, and it can even be brewed into lemonade. Salad burnet flowers are also edible and great for garnishing and bouquets; however, this plant isn't recommended for drying.

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



Salad burnet is usually pest and problem-free, although it can develop leaf spot in humid locations with poor air flow.

Spacing plants apart and watering at the soil line will help you avoid this issue!

## WIT AND WISDOM

- President Thomas Jefferson was a big fan of salad burnet and often grew it in his garden!
- During the Revolutionary War, soldiers drank tea made with salad burnet leaves the night before battle as it was believed the infusion would prevent bleeding.

**HERBS**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Lauren Landers



Lauren is a gardener, writer, and public speaker with over a decade of experience helping others learn

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