Bay

Laurus nobilis



Height: Up to 6m if unpruned

Suitable for: Ordinary well drained soil in sun or partial shade. Protect from frost and cold wind in hard winters. Ideal for container growing.

Summary: Bay is a well known hardy evergreen shrub which can grow into a small tree if unrestricted. Once established it has clusters of creamy-yellow flowers in late Spring. It makes an attractive specimen when grown in a container where it can be trimmed to a variety of ornamental shapes. We are selling small plants in 7cm pots for you to grow on yourself in a larger pot, before planting in their final position.

More information:

Bay is a compact evergreen shrub which can grow to be a small tree in the warmer parts of the UK. It has glossy evergreen leaves with small clusters of creamy – yellow flowers opening in spring. The leaves are only aromatic when bruised or crushed and are a well known and widely use herb in the kitchen.

Bay is a native of dry rocky slopes in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. When grown in the UK it likes a rich, well drained soil preferably with some shelter in winter from cold wind and harsh temperatures especially in the north of the country. As a young plant it is best grown in a container until at least 60 cm tall before planting out. The container can then be easily moved undercover in winter as young plants are the most vulnerable to cold.

Bay trees are frequently grown as ornamental specimens in large containers, where they can be pruned and trained into attractive shapes such as pyramids and standards.

The name *Laurus nobilis* comes from the Latin *laurus* meaning to praise, and nobilis meaning noble or renowned. Its history goes back to early Greece when athletic competitions were held to honour Apollo and the winners were crowned with a wreath of bay. The Romans also used bay as a symbol of victory and it was also reputed to ward off lightening strikes, hence the Emperors wore a laurel wreath on their heads for protection.

Bay is widely used in the kitchen in both sweet and savoury dishes. It responds best to long cooking, giving out it's aromatic and distinctive flavour.

- A traditional ingredient of bouquet garni along with parsley, thyme and rosemary.
- Add to soups, stews and casseroles for long cooking.
- Add a leaf to the poaching liquid when cooking fish for a distinctive flavour.
- Place a fresh leaf in a glass of milk for an hour before drinking to improve the flavour.
- It is often used in sweet sauces to add piquancy and also as an ingredient in sorbets.

Bay is no longer widely used in herbal medicine. It is a bitter, stimulating herb which aids the digestion and stomach disorders, and has antiseptic properties to soothe skin rashes and as an insect repellent. Put a few fresh leaves into your bath water to ease aches and pains.