

Home Gardening Series

Fennel

Craig R. Andersen
Extension Horticulturist -
Vegetables

Environment

Light – sunny
Soil – well-drained loam
Fertility – medium
pH – 5.5 to 7.0
Temperature – warm
Moisture – moist

Culture

Planting – direct seed, early spring
Spacing – 12 x 24 inches
Hardiness – semi-hardy perennial
Fertilizer – medium

Fennel – *Foeniculum vulgare*

Fennel, a semi-hardy perennial, is cultivated as an annual. Two kinds are commonly grown in the garden: sweet fennel and Florence fennel. Sweet fennel is most popular and reaches a height of 3 to 4 feet. Florence fennel or Finocchio grows about 2 feet high and has thickened, overlapping leaf bases.

Fennel is a member of the dill and parsley family.

Cultural Practices

Fennel grows best on sunny, well-drained, medium-fertility soil that has plenty of lime. It is propagated from seeds sown 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep in open ground in early spring. Thin sweet fennel plants to stand about 18 inches apart in rows 24 inches apart. If plants are to be used like endive or celery, cut and use flower stalks when they are about to bloom. When seed on the flower stalk matures, harvest and store in an airtight container.

Space Florence fennel plants 6 to 12 inches apart in the row. When the thickened, overlapping leaf bases form a swelling (called *apple*) about the size of an egg, heap a little earth halfway up the base. Cutting can usually begin 10 days later.

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Cultivars

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	Seed/ 100 Ft of Row	Sources (see "Sources" paragraph below)	Remarks
Fennel	Florence	100	1/4 oz	5, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35	Anise-like flavored leaves for salads, eggs, fish and sauces seasoning. Delicious bulbous stems.
	Bronze	100	1/4 oz	4, 16, 29	Similar to Florence fennel, bronze-colored leaves.
	Zefa Fino	80	1/4 oz	4, 16	Bulb type, bolt resistant. Large, flat-round bulbs.
	Goal	75	1/4 oz	16	Large, round bulbs are attractive, uniform and early. Crisp and mildly anise flavored.

Sources

For a list of sources referred to by number, request FSA6106, *Seed Sources: Vegetable and Herb*, for current address, telephone and web site.

DR. CRAIG R. ANDERSEN is Extension horticulturist - vegetables, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

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