

Did You Know?



Cilantro, *Coriandrum sativum*

- Coriander and cilantro are the same plant and belong in the Apiaceae (Umbelliferae) family. The seeds from this plant are referred to as coriander and the leaves referred to as cilantro or Chinese parsley.
- *Coriandrum sativum* is native to the eastern Mediterranean region. Archaeological evidence has been found in Israeli caves dating back 8,000 - 8700 years ago. It was also cultivated by the ancient Greeks. Portions of coriander seeds were found in the tomb of Tutankhamen in Egypt. It is believed that the Egyptians cultivated cilantro since it does not grow wild there.
- Medicinal uses of cilantro date back to Hippocrates. Modern day research is continuing to discover that the antifungal, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antioxidant properties, anticonvulsant effects, and decreased blood sugar are among the medicinal benefits.
- Some people find the taste of cilantro to be soapy and unpleasant and others describe the same plant to smell like dirt or dead bugs. Yet most people describe the leaves to be fresh, citrusy and herbaceous. 3-21% of people have genetic variants in the olfactory receptor gene that are responsible for this response.
- Famous chefs have publicly declared their dislike of cilantro. Julia Child stated in a 2002 interview with Larry King that it was best to “pick it (cilantro) out and throw it on the floor.” Ina Garten has also noted her dislike and does not use it in her recipes.
- Cilantro is popular in Mexican, Asian, Indian and in dishes throughout the world. All parts of the plant are edible, though the leaves and seeds are used primarily. The root is often used in Thai cooking.
- The leaves and tender stems of cilantro are used in curries, sauces, salsas, soups and salads. Cooking deepens the characteristic sharp flavor.
- Cilantro grows best in the cooler temperatures of the spring and fall. As temperatures heat up, the plant sends up a flower stalk and sets seed. (This process is called bolting.)
- Manage cilantro’s naturally fast life cycle by sowing seeds successively over a few weeks and by planting varieties that are slow to bolt such as ‘Slow Bolt’, ‘Leisure’, ‘Longstanding’ and ‘Santo’.

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- To encourage spring and fall seedlings, allow a few plants to flower, set and drop seeds.
- Rather than transplanting seedlings, sow seeds directly in the garden or a container.

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