Leaf Celery seeds (Soup celery)

Apium graveolens



Height: Up to 25cm

Suitable for: Partial shade in moist soil, good in containers.

Summary: Also called soup celery, leaf celery is darker than the standard celery which we buy in the greengrocers with much thinner stalks.

It is grown for its foliage which has a strong almost peppery flavour which is great in cooking. It looks very similar in all respects to flat leaf parsley, but with a characteristic celery flavour.

More information:

Pick the leaves on a cut and come again basis and use it in soups, sauces and stews, adding at the end of the cooking time. Give a kick to salads but use sparingly so that it doesn't overwhelm the other ingredients.

Leaf celery is also called cutting or soup celery giving us a good hint of its ideal uses. When it is growing it looks very much like flat leaf parsley but with slightly stiffer stems, or indeed very similar to coriander. It does however have its own unique and very distinct flavour — so no mistaking it when you cut and taste!

Direct sowing doesn't have a great germination rate, far better to start sowing under cover in small pots or modules and plant out later in spring when the small plants have rooted well in their containers. The seeds prefer light to germinate so press them gently into the compost surface and try to water from below initially until the seeds have germinated, so that they don't get covered by compost by mistake.

Once planted out and growing on celery leaf is a vigorous herb requiring partial shade with a little sun and a rich moist soil, if the plants become too dry they may well go to seed prematurely. Harvest regularly on a cut and come again basis as the young foliage has the best flavour and old leaves can become very strong and tough.

As the name suggests celery leaf is ideal added to soups and stews where its strong and almost peppery flavour gives added relish to any of these savoury dishes. Add towards the end of cooking time as the flavour will diminish with cooking.

The young leaves from the centre of the plant add a lovely piquancy and pepperyness to any salad especially those with milder crunchy lettuce leaves and cucumber.