Coriander seeds (Cilantro, Chinese Parsley, Pak Chee)

Coriandrum sativum



Height: 20 cm and up to 45 cm in flower

Suitable for: Rich moist soils in sun or a little shade.
Deep pots.

Summary: Coriander is an easily grown, annual culinary herb. The foliage closely resembles flat leaf parsley and has a strong flavour which is very popular in Asian cooking. All parts of the plant are used, most usually the foliage and seeds, but also the long tap roots.

More information:

Coriander is a delicious and versatile herb which is best sown directly where you would like it to grow. It quickly develops a long tap root so dislikes being transplanted, this can cause it to go prematurely to seed.

The plants prefer a rich moist soil in full sun, although they will tolerate a little shade especially at midday. Hot dry conditions invariably cause the plants to run to seed, if the foliage becomes fine and feathery this is a sure sign that the plant is on its way to flowering. If planting in containers do choose a large deep one and make sure that it is kept moist at all times.

Sow the seeds in succession every 3 or 4 weeks to ensure a continuing supply of the herb for the kitchen.

Coriander is quite hardy and will withstand early autumn frosts but needs protection from prolonged cold weather.

Coriander is used in a variety of Asian dishes including Indian curries, Thai curries and Chinese dishes. It is also a common ingredient of salsas and salads of many ethic origins.

The leaves have a strong slightly bitter taste, disliked by some people and extremely popular with the majority! The leaves are always best eaten fresh never cooked, so if adding to hot food then stir in at the last minute.

The seeds have a milder sweeter lemony taste and are used ground or crushed as a spice in savoury dishes as well homebaking, and used whole in pickles.

The long tap roots are occasionally used as well, ground up and roasted lightly to use like coffee, fresh roots are used finely chopped especially in Thai recipes.

If you are using pre-packaged coriander with no root then you can substitute double the quantity of finely chopped stems.

Coriander is always best used when picked fresh and does not dry successfully. If you have an excess it freezes well either as whole leaves in a plastic bag with the air excluded, or chopped and covered in water in individual icecube trays.

It also makes a great 'pesto' for winter use.

> Chop the leaves either by hand or in a food processor, not too finely as you need to be able to distinguish individual leafy bits. Mix with olive oil to make a thick paste and bottle in small sterilised jars. These can be frozen for up to 9 months and thawed out as you need them.