

## How to Grow Florence fennel

### General

Also known as Finocchio. The wonderful fresh flavour of this easy-to-grow vegetable is prized in European cooking. The swollen leaf bases have a distinctive anise flavour which enlivens salads and sandwiches. Cooked, the flavour stands out in casseroles or simply braised as a unique side dish. The seeds and fronds are also a culinary delight, and beneficial insects love the flower heads. Fennel, as well as anise, star anise, and some other plants, contains the compound anethole, which is widely used as a licorice flavouring. Anethole is thought to be 13 times sweeter than sugar.

### Latin

*Foeniculum vulgare* var. *dulce*  
Family: Apiaceae

### Difficulty

Easy

### Season & Zone

**Season:** Warm season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** Hardy from zone 5 to 10

### Timing

Start indoors in late February to March or direct sow from April to late June/early July for a fall harvest. Optimal soil temperature: 10-25°C (50-75°F). Seeds should sprout in 10-14 days.

### Starting

If raising transplants, use individual pots or plugs. Sow seeds 1cm (½") deep, and aim for plants 15-30cm (6-12") apart in the row.

### Growing

Ideal pH: 5.5-7.0. Rich, well-drained soil produces the best bulbs. Transplant in April when seedlings are 5cm (2") tall. If raising transplants, do not disturb the roots, as this may cause plants to bolt. Keep well watered to ensure succulent bulbs and prevent bolting.

### Harvest

Use a knife to slice the bulb from the root when it has thickened to 5cm (2") or more across. If this is done carefully, smaller bulbs will sprout from the root later.

