

ANOTHER  
HERB HERBERT FAVOURITE HERBS  
FACT SHEET

# Fennel

*Foeniculum vulgare var. azoricum*  
*Foeniculum vulgare purpurea*

There is just one single species of this genus, however, there are three main forms or variants. Native of the Mediterranean region, it is now widely naturalized in many places around the world. The name foeniculum is said to have been given to it by the Romans. It is a derivative of the Latin foenum which means 'hay' due to its resemblance. It was a popular vegetable for the Romans who ate the shoots, seeds and the root of this plant. The ancient Greeks also thought highly of fennel, they used as a slimming aid and to treat various illnesses. It was also popular during the Middle Ages where it was used for flavoring. Seeds were often chewed to allay hunger during Lent.

## DESCRIPTION

*Foeniculum vulgare var. azoricum*, also known as finocchio, with its soft green feathery foliage, has a bulbous base consisting of overlapping celery-like leaf stems. The whole plant has a distinct anise aroma.

A purple leaf form, *Foeniculum vulgare purpureum* has striking bronze feathery leaves.

## PARTS USED

Leaves, seeds, swollen leaf base.

## PROPERTIES

An aromatic herb with carminative actions and is a mild stimulant.

## USES OF THE HERB

### Culinary

Bulbs of Florence fennel are sliced and eaten raw in salads or cooked as a vegetable. Leaves are finely chopped and used as a flavoring for salads, sauces, soups and fish dishes. Seeds are used for desserts, cakes, breads and added to Italian sausages to give them a distinct taste.

### Medicinal

Fennel tea is good for settling an upset stomach. An infusion can be used as a mouthwash for sore throats.

### Ornamental

Bronze fennel makes an attractive plant for the perennial border, particularly if it is offset against silver foliage.

## CULTIVATION

Prefers fertile well-drained soil in a sunny position. Make sure that Florence fennel receive ample water during warmer months to help develop good bulbous bases. Do not plant near dill or coriander as these herbs will affect fennel's seed production.

## HARVEST

Pick leaves as needed through the growing season. The bulb is at its best in spring, dig it up cutting off the roots and the stems to just above the swollen parts. Use fresh. Seeds will drop easily when ripe, so snip off seed head and store in a paper bag to catch the seeds as they drop.



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Height 1-2.5m (3-8') x  
Spread 45cm-1m(1.5-3.5')

