



Cilantro is now the most popular herb the USA having surpassed basil a few years ago! Cilantro thrives in cool weather; temperatures cause it to cease leaf production and begin flowering. Because it has a taproot and does not transplant well, cilantro should *always* be sown directly in the garden. In cold-winter climates, plant successive sowings cilantro seeds in spring and again in late summer so you have a constant supply. Mild-winter gardeners can often grow it in late summer and fall and through much of the winter and then plant again for a for a spring crop. The trick is to sow some seeds and then a few weeks later, sow some more, so when the weather begins to turn hot in summer, you will have some young leafy plants coming along to harvest.

The delicate flowers of cilantro are useful in their own right: they attract beneficial insects, such as hover flies and parasitic wasps, as well as a wide range of pollinator species. They also make an attractive edible garnish! Let some flowers go to seed because the seeds of cilantro plants are the spice coriander and can be harvested and enjoyed for culinary use.

**1. Prepare.** Begin sowing cilantro seed when weather is still cool (mid-spring in Northern states; spring and late summer in the West and fall and late winter in the South and Southwest), making successive sowings every couple of weeks. Loosen soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Mix in some compost or slow-release fertilizer to provide plants with nutrients. Then rake the soil smooth, removing any large clumps and rocks.

**2. Plant.** Sow cilantro seeds in a wide row, about a quarter-inch deep and 2 inches apart. Cover seed with soil and press gently.

**3. Grow.** Keep seedbed moist until cilantro germinates, and be sure to provide moisture to growing plants during periods of dry weather. When seedlings are about 3 inches tall, thin them to about 4 inches apart, using the thinned seedlings in the kitchen. Apply a layer of organic mulch to conserve moisture and keep soil cool. Pull weeds that sprout nearby.

**4. Enjoy.** Harvest cilantro in the morning, when the leaves are crisp, cutting the stems as you need them. If the weather is cool, they will re-grow. The flavor of the leaves is pungent and complex, and is often combined with lime. A refreshing complement to fiery chiles, cilantro is used to add flavor to a wide range of dishes in both South American and Asian cuisines; salsas, guacamoles, Thai peanut sauces, and Indian chutneys wouldn't be the same without this signature herb.



#### AT A GLANCE

 **Exposure:** Full sun. Light shade may help prolong the harvest in summer.

**Planting time:** Plant when the weather is cool: spring and late summer in cold-winter regions, or fall through spring where below-freezing temperatures are rare.

**Planting depth:** 1/4 inch deep

**Spacing in row:** Sow 2 inches apart; thin to 6 inches apart.

**Time to harvest:** 35 to 45 days.



Cilantro can be sown directly into a large container.