

# Organic Fennel:

## Growing and Seed Saving Information



### Fennel

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a hardy annual in the *Umbelliferae* family, which includes parsnip, carrot, dill, chervil, coriander, parsley, skirret and celery.

- Bulbing-types produce large sweet bulbs.
- Non-bulbing (leaf) fennel is grown as an herb or for seed and the attractive, feathery leaves.

### Soil and Nutrient Requirements

Fennel needs deep, well drained, moderately fertile soil with a pH from 6.1-8.0. It has a very deep taproot.

### Position

Full Sun

### Seeding Depth

1/4-1/2"

### Plant Spacing

Direct seed at 2" and thin to 6-8"

### Row Spacing

18"

### When to Sow

Direct seed fennel mid-spring through late summer, or start transplants 4-5 weeks before planting date. Plant outdoors after danger of hard frost has passed. Bolting can result from disturbing the roots.

### Frost Tolerant

Yes

### Drought Tolerant

Yes.

### Heat Tolerant

No

### Seed Specs

7M seeds/oz avg. M=1,000

### Seeding Rate

400 plants/100' double row using 6" plant spacing; 58,100 plants/acre, using 6" plant spacing, 18" row spacing.

### Harvest

Harvest bulbs at 3-4" in diameter.

### Storage

Fennel is delicate and will dry out quickly in storage. Store in cooler as close to freezing as possible. Quality will keep for 3-4 days.

### Pest Info

- Aphids, whitefly and lepidopterous larvae can be controlled by floating row cover in areas where they are a problem.

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### Disease Info

- Fungal leaf blights caused by *Alternaria dauci* or *Cercospora carotae* can cause severe defoliation and greatly reduce yields. Generally, cercospora blight appears earlier in the season than alternaria blight. Both these fungi are seed-borne but can also be spread by crop residue from previous years.
- White mold (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) manifests as a cottony white mycelium around roots and lower plant parts, usually late in the season. Avoid planting in areas which are shady or have poor drainage, practice crop rotations with non-vegetable crops.

### Seed Saving Instructions

Insect pollinated annual. Varieties should be isolated by ½ mile. When umbels are dry they may be harvested from the plant. Seeds will retain 50% germination for four years.