



# Easy Gardening

**DILL • DILL • DILL • DILL • DILL • DILL • DILL**

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**D**ill (*Anethum graveolens*) is a perennial herb that typically reaches 2 to 4 feet tall at maturity. Its leaves are used fresh or dried as an herb in dips, soups, salads, and other dishes. The seeds are used as a spice for pickling and for adding flavor to stews and roasts.

Dill is native to southern Russia, western Africa, and the Mediterranean. It is part of the Umbelliferae family, which also includes cumin and parsley.



**Figure 1.** Dill seeds are used as a spice for pickling and for adding flavor to stews and roasts.

## Varieties

These varieties are best for Texas:

- Bouquet
- Dukat
- Fernleaf
- Long Island
- Superdukat



**Figure 2.** Dill plants can survive low temperatures but grow best when soil temperature is about 70°F.

## Site selection

Plant dill in full sun and protect it from strong gusts of wind. The plant can survive temperatures down to 25°F.

## Soil preparation

Dill can grow fairly well in poor soil conditions. But it grows best in well-drained, sandy or loamy soil that is slightly acidic (pH 5.8 to 6.5). The soil temperature should remain at about 70°F.

## Planting

Sow the seeds directly in the ground from April through May, after all danger of frost has passed. Do not transplant them.

They should germinate in 10 to 14 days.

Seedlings should be planted  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch deep and from 12 to 15 inches apart.

## Growing dill in containers

Dill can also be easily grown in containers, both indoors and outdoors. Choose a deep container to accommodate the tall plant and its long roots. Use normal potting compost and keep the plants well watered.

If the container is inside, place the plants where they will receive at least 5



**Figure 3.** Dill containers need enough space for the plant's tall growth and long roots.

to 6 hours of direct sunlight each day. You may need to support the plants with a stake. The dill will be ready for harvest within about 8 weeks after the seeds were sown.

## Fertilizing

Fertilizer may be broadcast (spread on the surface throughout the planting) or applied as a side dressing (applied to the soil on or around the sides of the plant). Do not apply it directly with the seed.

In general, apply a formulation such as 20-20-20 once in late spring at the rate of 0.70 pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet. "Triple 20" fertilizer is commonly used by gardeners because it is readily available at garden centers.



**Figure 4.** Dill has the most flavor when it is picked before flowering begins.

A better formulation that doesn't apply too much phosphorus is 15-5-10, and it is also available at garden centers. When using 15-5-10, apply 1 pound per 100 square feet.

## Harvesting

Dill grown outside matures about 90 days after seeding. Although the leaves can be harvested as soon as they are big enough to use, they contain the most flavors if picked before flowering begins. Clip them close to the stem in the early morning or late evening.

Once the flowers form, they will bloom and seed. Cut the seed heads 2 to 3 weeks after bloom. Place the cuttings in paper or plastic bags, and allow them to dry; the seeds will fall off when they are ready.

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