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**Growing**

# ***Culantro***

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**in your  
Garden or Patio**

**Culantro** (*Eryngium foetidum L*) is a culinary and medicinal leafy green herb commonly used throughout the West Indies, Central America, and many Asian countries. The herb is mainly used as a seasoning in the preparation of a range of foods including vegetable and meat dishes, sauces, chutneys, and preserves. The plant produces essential oils that consist of about 40 compounds. The aroma of the leaves is very similar to that of cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum L*) and in recipes it is possible to substitute one for the other.



There are many names by which this plant is recognized: *recao* and *culantro* (Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic), *fitweed* (Guyana), *herbe à fer* (Martinique and Guadeloupe), *coulante* (Haiti), and *shado beni* and *bhandhania* (Trinidad and Tobago).

## Growing Culantro



Culantro is a tender perennial and is more likely an annual in Massachusetts. The plants should be set out after the danger of frost has passed, usually in early June. Transplants should be spaced 4 - 6 inches within the row and no closer than 6 inches apart between the rows. Culantro grows well in fertile soils and will need supplemental fertility (manure or fertilizer) in poor soils.

Culantro can also be grown in pots in your home or on your patio. As the plant grows, you may need to use larger pots to give the tap root room to grow.

When culantro begins to produce flowers the leaves become tough and less suitable for eating. By keeping the plant in the shade the extent of flowering is reduced. It is recommended that you find a shady spot, such as beneath a shrub or near a tree, in which to keep your plant. You can also plant it near taller crops, such as peppers or eggplant that will give it shade. In the shade there will be fewer flower stalks produced and the leaves will maintain their succulence.

Even when kept in the shade there will be some flower stalks produced. It is best to remove these so that the plant can put its energy into leaf growth. It is easy to remove the flower stalks using scissors.



The earlier the stalks are removed the better the leaves will grow; however, you want to be sure that what you are removing is the flower stalk. Luckily, it is not difficult to identify a developing flower stalk even though it is green in color. The diagram shows what to look for and the best way to remove it.

## Salsa Recipe

Ingredients:

- 3 large tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium white onion, diced
- 1 hot pepper, diced (or some hot sauce)
- Juice of 1 lemon and 1 lime
- Half cup of chopped fresh culantro
- Salt and pepper (to taste)

Just mix all the ingredients together in a bowl. It is best to refrigerate this for a while to let it cool down and allow the great flavors to mingle. It makes a nice dip.