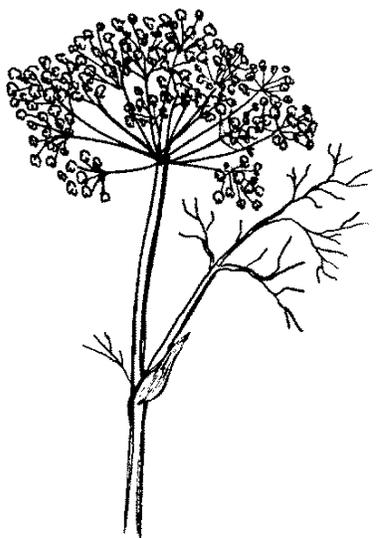


An Herb Society of America Fact Sheet



Dill

Anethum graveolens (dill, common dill)

Anethum sowa (Indian dill, sowa)

Description

Dills are annual or biennial plants native to southwest Asia and Southern Europe, and naturalized in the rest of Europe and America. They belong to the family *Apiaceae*, formerly called *Umbelliferae* for the umbrella-like umbels of flowers characteristic of the family. The common name is sometimes said to derive from the Anglo-Saxon verb *dilla*, meaning "to lull," because of dill's sedative effect on the digestive system.

Common dill grows very upright, usually with only one hollow stalk, with feathery linear leaves and greenish-yellow florets in a large, open umbel up to 6 inches across. The whole plant

is fragrant. It may reach 2½ to 3 feet in height. Indian dill, *A. sowa*, grows to over 3 feet and differs slightly in flavor.

Culture

Dill is grown from seed each year, and takes 2½ months to produce a harvest of new seed. Since it is tap-rooted, the seedlings do not transplant readily. Thinning should be done by pulling and using unwanted plants. Some plants should be constantly snipped for their leaves and some left to flower and produce seeds, or succession plantings may be made every 2 weeks. The cultivar 'Fernleaf,' growing only to 18 inches, produces more foliage and is slower to bolt. 'Bouquet' bears compact, prolific seed heads and is considered best for pickling. Dill will self-sow readily. Some gardeners allow a rather crowded patch of dill to grow so that the plants hold one another erect.

Uses

Dill is a favorite culinary herb, both in leaf and seed, and is popular in northern European cooking. The fresh greens blend well with fish, eggs, potatoes, meats, breads, salads and sauces; dill seed is used in pickling and to make a dill-flavored vinegar. Seeds of Indian dill, *A. sowa*, are used in curry mixtures, and the leaves are used in soups and rice. Dill, along with trefoil, vervain and St. John's-wort, was once said to "hinder witches of their will." It is used as a digestive agent for the treatment of colic, flatulence and hiatus hernia. The oil is used commercially in medicines, soaps, detergents, and foods.

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