



The Herb Society of America

Promising Plants Profiles

Apium graveolens

Genus: *Apium*

Specific Epithet: *graveolens*

Common Names: wild celery, smallage

Family: Apiaceae

Flower Color: white or greenish-white

Form: biennial

Hardiness Zone: 7-9

Height: 18-24"

Width: 18"

Soil: moist, rich soil

Sun: full sun or partial shade



Uses: medicinal, culinary *

“A few years ago, I had a few plants of wild celery left over after planting and offered them to some volunteers. Next winter they raved about what a wonderful, useful, and tasty plant this was, and asked where they could get it for their gardens. This is an herb that has been used for hundreds of years, not a new and exciting plant, so I thought everyone knew about it. However, when I asked around, I realized that everyone knew about cultivated celery, *Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*, but the wild celery of old was a plant forgotten by modern gardeners.

Wild celery, or smallage, is a biennial that tolerates a wide range of growing conditions. It thrives in a slightly moist, rich garden soil and full sun, but grows perfectly well in a lean, slightly dry soil with a bit of shade. In zones 7 and higher, it prefers some shade.

Wild celery is easy to grow from seed, which we sow at the end of March or beginning of April. When fully grown, it looks similar to flat-leafed parsley, with shiny, dark-green leaves which stay green and harvestable through mild winters. In late spring or early summer, a flower stalk grows 18-24 inches tall with umbels of small white flowers.

The stems have a strong celery taste and are slightly sweet compared to the bitter tasting leaves. Both add a nice flavor to salads, soups, and stews. They can be used fresh or dried, and only a small amount is needed because of the strong flavor. The seeds can also be collected, dried, and used for flavoring.”

– James Adams, Curator of the National Herb Garden, Promising Plants Presentation, 2004

* Although small amounts of seeds, leaves and stems can be used for flavoring, wild celery may be toxic in large quantities. If eaten or handled, stems may cause photosensitivity and/or anaphylactic/allergic reactions in some individuals.

Plant Source: Seed is widely available.

Photo by James Adams

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