

Using Local Foods

This leaflet is part of a series intended as a marketing aid for farmers' market vendors.

Topics were suggested by a vendor as a means of informing and educating customers about items that could be locally grown. Herbs, spices, and condiments are the foundation of many healthful cuisines around the world. This series covers oregano, basil, hot peppers, seed spices, and cilantro—all of which are produced in the U.S. and sold at farmers' markets.

Each short, illustrated leaflet can be printed in color or black-and-white. Basic information about each food includes its history and suggested uses. Cookbooks or the Internet should be consulted for specific recipes. For more information about the Local Foods Series and local food systems, contact the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service at **1-800-346-9140** or **www.attra.ncat.org**.



Photo: Janet Bachmann, NCAT

ATTRA Local Foods Series No. 2 – Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum* L.)

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This leaflet is available on the Web at:
www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/localfoods2.html
or
www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/localfoods2.pdf

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ATTRA Local Foods Series No. 2

Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum* L.)



Photo: Jeffrey Collingwood

A Favorite Across the Globe

Many recipes call for cilantro. Its bright-green, flat leaves not only make an attractive garnish, but also add flavor and color to salsas, salads, sauces, soups, and sandwiches. Versatile cilantro is a popular condiment in Asian, Latin American, and Mediterranean cuisine. Though it has only in recent years become commonly available in the United States, cilantro has long been used in other parts of the world.

Experience the flavors of the
world without leaving town—
enjoy local produce!

Spring Beauty

Cilantro may appear in many cuisines, but it's not available in many seasons. In climates with hot summers, cilantro grows best if planted in the fall. In early spring, the plant forms a flat, dark-green rosette of leaves. Soon after the spring equinox, the seed stalk shoots up, and the leafy part of this annual is already past its prime. Fortunately, growers have some strategies for extending the season. Improved types of cilantro developed in the United States are grown specifically for their foliage. Slow-bolting varieties can lengthen the harvest season by about two weeks. Planting cilantro later in the spring and shading the plants are other ways that producers manage to provide fresh, green cilantro well past its normal season. (*Adapted from:* Tucker, A.O., and T. Dibaggio. 2000. *The Big Book of Herbs*. Interweave Press, Loveland, NM. p. 239–242.)

Handle with Care

Cilantro is usually sold in bunches, as a cut herb. Because it does not transplant well, it's not often sold as a potted herb. Cilantro leaves do not dry well, but it is possible to freeze them for later use. For the full benefit of taste and color, you just can't beat freshly picked, locally grown cilantro.

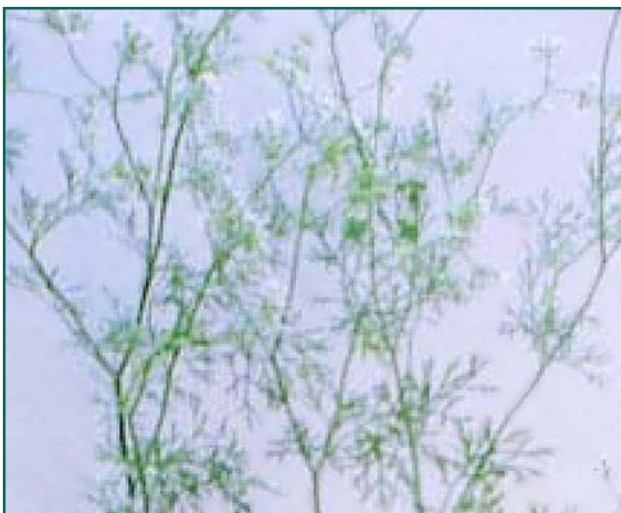


Photo: Katherine Adam, NCAT



Surprising Transformation

Dry, winnowed seeds of the mature cilantro plant are known as the spice coriander—used whole or ground in curries, pickles, sauces, cakes, fruit beverages, and soups.