
Culantro

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Culantro (<http://edn.link/culantro>) (*Eryngium foetidum*) is often confused with, or substituted for, cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum* L.; also called coriander). To add to the confusion, culantro has as many common names as countries of use:

Common name	Language or Country
longleaf or spiny coriander, sawtooth herb	English
shado beni or bhandhania	Trinidad and Tobago
chadron benee	Dominica
coulante	Haiti
recao	Puerto Rico
culantro de pata	Honduras
culantro coyote	Costa Rica
alcanate	El Salvador
coentro do par	Brazil
fit weed	Guyana
ketumbar java	Malaysia
pak chi farang	Thailand
ngo gai	Vietnam
bhandhanya	India

Culantro is in the Apiaceae family, which includes carrot, parsley, celery, and parsnip. Like many of the plants in this family, culantro has a biennial life cycle. Its natural habitat is the moist, shaded floors of tropical forests. When cultivated, it does best in fertile soil, planted in the shade and watered abundantly. Full sun, high temperatures, and long day length will end foliage production and initiate flowering and seed production, known as bolting. Preventing bolting is the key to longer production of the leafy cooking ingredient. Culantro is planted from



Figure 15. Culantro leaves. *Source: The Rican Chef, Creative Commons Attribution License*

seed and takes three weeks or more to germinate. The leaves form a basal rosette and should be picked when 30 cm long and 4 cm wide (Figure 15). As the season progresses and flowering begins, the emerging flower stalks should be plucked off to promote vegetative growth. Culantro is relatively pest and disease free.

Culantro is commonly used in chutneys, curries, soups, and meat and noodle dishes in Asia. Sofrito, a common spice mixture added to many recipes throughout Latin America, consists of culantro, garlic, onion, sweet peppers, tomatoes, salt, and pepper. Culantro's nutritional benefits include high levels of vitamins A, B2, B1, and C; it is also a rich source of calcium and iron. Culantro is used medicinally to reduce fevers (including from malaria), to relieve pneumonia symptoms, to reduce inflammation, and to relieve pain. The leaves and roots are boiled in water and used as a tea.

Go to ECHO's Global Seed Bank

(https://www.echocommunity.org/pages/echo_global_seedbank_info) or Asia Seed Bank (https://www.echocommunity.org/pages/echo_asia_seedbank_info) to order culantro seeds and learn about other herbs we offer.

References

Ramcharan, C. 1999. Culantro: A Much Utilized, Little Understood Herb (<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7c33/0df56b78c6fd3c34cc776c458ed5f13dc6d2.pdf>). *Perspectives on New Crops and New Uses* 506-509.

WorldCrops. 2018. Culantro (<https://worldcrops.org/crops/culantro>). WorldCrops. 2018.