

Subject: Culinary herbFAQ (v. 1. 14) Part 2/7

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Organization: ...ei meill' oo...

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## 2.4 Chives

Latin name:

Chives: *Allium schoenoprasum*.

Chinese chives: *Allium tuberosum*.

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### 2.4.1 Growing chives

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From: Linda Kovacs (kovacsla@vnet.ibm.com)

I started with a small pot from a discount store, planted it in moderately poor soil that got about 1/2 day sun. It went crazy! Grew big, made flowers and seeds, the next year the seeds came up and (repeat previous line over and over and over ...). I now have about 6 square feet of chives. I don't even water them.

After they blossom and the flowers dry, you can collect the drying flowers and shake out the seeds to plant elsewhere. The blossom stems should be removed to prevent their being harvested by accident, as they are rather woody and tough. They'll dry out anyway, and should be removed to keep the plant looking nice.

A funny thing happened with that first plant. It was next to a rose bush infested with aphids. When I planted the chives, the aphids disappeared. Then I got a fruit tree that had problems with aphids. I scattered some chive seeds, and the aphids disappeared again.

Chives are so easy to grow that I don't think I'll ever be without them again. To get a start, find some chive seeds or a pot of chives.

To grow them indoors, put on a sunny windowsill and water when the soil gets a bit dry.

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:

Chives are a very hardy perennial of the same genus as onions, leeks and garlic. It makes a great container plant and does well indoors if given adequate light. A 5-inch pot of chives should be divided and repotted every spring if the clump has spread enough.

Chives like rich, moist well-drained soil with a pH between 6 and 8. It likes full sun but will tolerate partial shade.

The seeds germinate easily in 10 to 12 days, but the plants grow and spread slowly at first. It is quicker to obtain a division of a clump from someone. Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep, in small sparse groups spaced about 12 inches apart all around to create clumps quicker, or plant seeds singly. Clumps grown outdoors should be divided every 3 or 4 years. Chives make a good companion plant for beets but should not be planted with beans, carrots, or tomatoes.

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#### 2.4.2 Harvesting chives

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From: Linda Kovacs (kovacs1a@vnet.ibm.com)

Chives are best harvested with a scissors or sharp knife. Cut the blade as close to the ground as possible without injuring other blades. It's best to cut individual blades unless you are shearing the whole plant. This leaves the newly sprouted blades to grow bigger for your next harvest.

If you're harvesting during or after blooming time, watch out for those blossom stems. They're tough and woody.

Rinse the blades, gather together in bunches, and cut across with a sharp knife into the size you need.

When chives are in flower, you can snip off the flowers and use them before they start to fade.

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From: ?

I cut my chives back to the ground about three times each summer. I've found that this forces them to send up a whole bunch of replacement shoots. I usually wait to pick a few of the flowers to include in arrangements.

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> My chives are flowering. Should I pinch off the flowers so they will not start to die for the winter?

From: karyn.siegel-maier@kotl.mhv.net

Chives, if well established in the garden, tend to flower in early spring, and sometimes again in mid-summer. The chive blossoms make an excellent vinegar, and can be used in baking if pulled apart. I don't cut my chives back, but let the seed fall to the ground resulting in more chives the following year.

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:

Cut off stems to about 2 inches tall, to encourage new growth. Stalks that flower tend to be rather tough and bitter, so it's better to clip off flower heads as they form, although they are a pleasant lavender color.

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#### 2.4.3 Using / preserving chives

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From: Linda Kovacs (kovacsla@vnet.ibm.com)

Chives dry nicely, but lose much of their flavor in the process. If you want chives in winter, grow a pot on the windowsill.

Chives can be used in any recipe that calls for chopped green onions. This gives a slightly different, somewhat milder flavor.

Chopped chives make a wonderful addition to salads. I use them instead of onions when the sweet onions aren't available, because the regular onions give me terrible heartburn.

Chive flowers are also wonderful in salads. They are both pretty and delicious, with a peppery-oniony flavor.

Chopped chives are great with potatoes. Baked potatoes with sour cream and chives is a classic, but you don't need the sour cream. Just baked potatoes with chives is tasty. Perhaps add a squirt of lemon juice! Also try chopped chives on top of mashed potatoes, or mixed in.

Chopped chives make a wonderful garnish for almost any non-sweet dish, and add a mild onion flavor as well.

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From: mrooney@mrooney.pn.com (Michael Rooney)

It is also possible to make chive pesto.

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:

Mix chopped chives into cream cheese, sour cream, cottage cheese, or butter. They are great with almost every kind of potato dish, and in salads. Chives is used in vichyssoise, asparagus and cauliflower soups. They can be used in egg dishes such as deviled eggs, omelets, and scrambled eggs. The small bulbs of chives can be used in sausage or pickled like small onions.

Chives are difficult to store dry due to a high moisture retention, but they can be chopped and frozen to be used as if fresh.

#### Potato Casserole

8 large potatoes, peeled cut and cooked

8 oz sour cream

8 oz cream cheese

1/3 c chives

Blend all together, and if your family will let you, refrigerate overnight.

Bake at 350 for 34-40 min or until warmed throughout.

The stem/leaves of chives have high amounts of vitamin A and vitamin C, as well as some iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, thiamin and niacin.

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From jrogow@ridgecrest.ca.us (Judith Rogow):

Chive Vinegar

When your chives (esp. garlic chives, yummmmy) are in bloom take four or five of the prettiest stalks w/heads and put them in a clear jar, cover w/white vinegar, cover, and stand in a dark cupboard for about a week. You will have pinkish vinegar w/a heavenly flavour. DO, however, watch out that the stalks do not have ants!

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## 2.5 Saffron

Latin name: Crocus sativus.

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### 2.5.1 Growing saffron

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From: rnold@sanewssa.mnet.uswest.com (Robert G. Nold)

Crocus sativus comes up and blooms without autumn rain in Denver, and grows throughout the winter here, too. Like all fall-blooming crocus (of which there are many species), they go dormant in summer.

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### 2.5.2 Harvesting saffron

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From: kcurr@cyberspace.com (Kaycee Curr):

...it is the threads that you would collect and dry. There are three of them (the stigmas) per crocus flower. (Over a million crocus flowers produce a pound of saffron- phew!)

From: lpdavies@bcfreenet.seflin.lib.fl.us (Leslie Paul Davies):

In planning your planting, estimate 6 mature plants will provide the stigmas for one small recipe.

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### 2.5.4 Which saffron do you have?

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From: chaseway@nbnet.nb.ca (wayne chase):

I have recently heard of a substitute for saffron. Dried Marigolds. Just air dry well and grind to powder. Use twice the amount of marigold as saffron to get same result.

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From: melnick@stsci.edu (Rita Melnick):

Saffron comes from *Crocus sativus*, the saffron crocus. It is a fall blooming crocus. Each flower contains 3 red threads (stigma) that you pick, then dry, for culinary use. Be sure to get ONLY *Crocus sativus*, not the other fall-blooming crocuses, as they are NOT edible.

As for the marigolds, I'm not sure if the above advice applies to all varieties of marigolds, but I do know that it is true of the pot marigold, also known as *Calendula*. It gives the yellow coloring of saffron, but not the saffron taste. Turmeric is also a yellowing substitute for saffron. But nothing else tastes like saffron!

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## 2.6 Zucchini flowers

Latin name: *Cucurbita pepo*.

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### 2.6.3 Using zucchini flowers

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From: Joep@reol.com

Zucchini flowers battered and fried are far superior to anything else you can do with zucchini. Mix water, flour, salt & pepper to a pancake consistency. If you want a fluffier batter add baking powder. Deep fry and eat them while hot. Tastes like a hint of Zucchini with creamy texture and cheese quality. 4 Zucchini plants is 3 too many :)

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From: bmillhol@sas.ab.ca (Billie)

I pick them when they are wilted and stuff them with seasoned cooked rice, put them in a casserole dish with a little seasoned chicken or vegetable broth and bake. Grate a little cheese on 3 min before taking out of oven. Beautiful and tasty.

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From: BEAVOMEY@aol.com

Blossoms are excellent stuffed with a goat /cream/or/ricotta-herb stuffing. Then battered and fried.

Had them at L'Etoile in Madison, WI with squash-goat cheese stuffing and pumpkin seed oil drizzled over the top. Excellent.

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## 2.7 Chamomile

Latin names:

German chamomile: *Matricaria recutita* (*M. chamomilla*)

Roman Chamomile: *Chamaemelum nobile* (*Anthemis nobilis*)

English Chamomile: *Chamaemelum nobile* 'Treneague'

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### 2.7.1 Growing chamomile

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From: Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>

German chamomile is an annual that reaches 1 to 2 feet tall and is grown from seed. It prefers a moist sandy soil with a pH between 6 and 8.5, and full sun. Plant outdoors as early in the spring as possible. If seeds are planted on June 1, flowers should appear in late July or early August. Seedlings transplant easily when one to two inches tall. Center of flower head is hollow.

English chamomile is a low-growing perennial that reaches 1 foot in height, propagated by seed, cuttings, or root division. It does well in a slightly acid to neutral soil with good drainage and full sun, but does not do well in hot, dry weather. Growing English chamomile in rich soil produces abundant foliage but few flowers. Center of flower head is solid. Chamomile makes a good companion plant for broccoli.

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> chamomile as groundcover - any experiences?

Anne\_E.\_Comer@kamilleche.wa.com (Anne E. Comer)

Chamomile is not usually the recommended choice for \*HUGE\* areas. It is sometimes used in mixtures. By itself it is best used in smallish areas where there will not be heavy foot traffic. It can stand some walking on and in fact that is one reason that it is used. When trodden on it releases a fragrance that is very pleasant to many people.

From: Denise Henry <denise@gromet.demon.co.uk>

Remember chamomile is not a grass!! This means that selective lawn weedkillers don't work. Make sure ground is well prepared with no perennial weeds and keep the site hand weeded in the first year until the plants grow together, after that you may still need to hand weed two or three times a year. A chamomile lawn is something special, but you can tell it was invented by people of a by-gone age with lots of money and a large supply of garden laborers. Try it in a small area by all means but only if you are prepared for some hard work. (PS. I think it is worth the effort.)

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From: naomib@sco.COM (Naomi Brokaw)

I like it, but it's not as carefree as some make it sound. I planted it last year (check the sections in the nursery where they sell herbs in flats). I was worried about mowing it before it got established, so I was going to wait until the cooler weather. Of course, this year, "cooler weather" meant about 7 months of rain (I'm just south of you, in Santa Cruz), so I could mow. The chamomile reached up, up, sending sun-seeking stems into my lavender, rock roses, rosemary, and yarrow. By the time I finally found the time and weather to mow, it was way too high, so I had to clip down by hand. That meant taking out most of the green stems and leaving the brown mat underneath. However, it did grow back the green within a few weeks, much faster than I feared.

It also has a tendency to die in patches, leaving brown again. Ugly while it lasts, but if you pull out the brown, the green will close in again in a few weeks.

I like the smell, but a lot of people find it cloying. On the other hand, you only smell it if you walk on it or cut it.

I tried mowing it a couple of weeks ago, with our rotary mower. Only a partial success. Our mower, which is probably dull, though sharp enough for the weeds out back, tends to pull up some of the chamomile clumps, instead of cutting them cleanly.

All in all, I'll use it again, but be aware of the drawbacks before you embrace it. It's a walkable ground-cover with a pleasant color that is nowhere near as thirsty as grass. Oh, it doesn't do well in medium to heavy shade. And bees love the flowers, so if you don't want a lot of bees (I love them), don't plant a lot of chamomile.

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From: Kate Borley <kab1004@hermes.cam.ac.uk>

Re: Chamomile lawns: I saw a chamomile seat in the Cambridge University Botanical Gardens, it was a stone base with chamomile growing on the top in a wooden box and a wooden chair back. Apparently the Elizabethans invented these seats which they liked because a pleasing smell is given off by the crushed chamomile when the seat is used.

HeK comment: Now I'd like to know how they kept their behinds dry after watering the chamomile... (biig grin)

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#### 2.7.2 Harvesting Chamomile

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From: Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>

Harvest and dry flowers of both species.

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#### 2.7.3 Using / preserving Chamomile

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From: Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>

Chamomile tea: one pint boiling water to 1/2 ounce flowers, steep 10 minutes. Strain. Add honey, sugar, milk or cream as desired.

Hair rinse: steep dried flowers in hot water, cool infusion. Strain.

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> I've been told that a chamomile infusion used in the hair will bring out highlights. Does anyone have a recipe for this? Thanks!

From: Graham@fragrant.demon.co.uk (Graham Sorenson)

Two methods come to mind immediately.

One is to get some chamomile tea (loose or bags) and make a strong

infusion. Or about five drops of Chamomile essential oil in a bowl of water. Then rinse hair with the result leaving for a while before rinsing out.

From: jrogow@ridgecrest.ca.us (Judith Rogow)  
Chamomile Tea - very strong - is a wonderful hair rinse for shine and a glint of sunlight.

From: Annette  
>.. seeking chamomile recipe for lightening hair..  
I'm Annette using another person's number but I thought I'd respond to your question. Basically, just make a good strong tea with chamomile and put into a pout where you can stick your head in. Let tea cool for awhile and then stick your head in (can you read upside down?) and stay for 5-10 minutes, do weekly and hopefully you will see lightening.

HeK comment: You need to strain the liquid before putting your head in it, for all above methods. Otherwise you'll be occupied for a week or so, combing out the flowers...

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2.7.4 Which chamomile do you have?

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From: Anne\_E.\_Comer@kamilche.wa.com (Anne E. Comer)  
The German chamomile, *Matricaria recutita* is an annual and will reseed itself. Obviously this means that it flowers. It is probably the best kind if you want to harvest the flowers for tea.

Roman Chamomile, *Chamaemelum nobile*, is perennial, probably the most used form for lawns also flowers.

English Chamomile, *Chamaemelum nobile* 'Treneague', is non-flowering and is very good for lawns and pathways but it must be grown from cuttings as there is no flower, thus no seed.

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2.8 Coriander/Cilantro/Culantro

Latin name: Coriander/Cilantro: *Coriandrum sativum*  
Culantro / Puerto Rican coriander / Spiny coriander: *Eryngium foetidum* (see 2.8.4)  
Vietnamese coriander: *Polygonum odoratum* (see 2.8.4)

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2.8.1 Growing coriander/cilantro

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:  
Coriander is a hardy, strong smelling annual native to southern Europe. It may reach up to 4 feet in height when grown outdoors.

Coriander needs full sun and plenty of moisture, and the soil should be



deep, well-drained, moderately rich with a pH between 6 and 8.

Coriander is easily grown from seed, germinating in one or two weeks, and self sows well in the garden. Plant seeds 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep, and thin seedlings to 8-12 inches apart. Sow seeds directly into the garden in the early spring, or into deep pots; coriander does not transplant well due to its taproot.

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>I've read that the best way to deal with bolting is to do several plantings over a season.

From: dplatt@ntg.com (Dave Platt)

I would agree.

Start a few cilantro plants each month, harvest the leaves before they bolt, and then sacrifice most of the plants before they flower. Leave a few to flower and set seed - the flowers are very attractive to ladybugs, green lacewings, and other beneficial (predatory) insects.

I've found that having a few cilantro plants flowering around the garden provides an excellent defense against aphids.

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> Does anyone know what conditions I should avoid to keep the cilantro from going to seed?

From: ?:

- If you plant the stuff really close together you'll probably get less bolting.

From: eaplatt@worm.hooked.net (Elizabeth Platt):

Don't let it get too hot--like lettuce, it's sensitive to heat. But, cilantro is an annual, so most pros advise planting several batches in succession, so that there's always some that isn't going to seed.

By the way, if you've gotten far along enough to worry about it going to seed, congratulations. All my cilantro is devoured, pronto, by the slugs and snails as soon as the first tiny leaves appear. Tastiest seedlings in the garden....

From: mrooney@mrooney.pn.com (Michael Rooney)

To avoid bolting, the hotter the weather the more it should be in the shade. There are also varieties that are designed to produce leaves and some designed to produce seeds.

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>I've been trying to grow cilantro (Chinese parsley, coriander) for several years so that I can use the leaves in Mexican and Chinese recipes.

>However, all I ever get are a few leaves, then they go into business making flowers and seeds. I never get big bunches of lush, leafy growth as

I've seen in produce departments of grocery and natural foods stores.  
>So far I've tried the following: planting in very early spring / planting later / fertilizing / not fertilizing / using seeds of plants that were hybridized for more leaf growth  
>Has anyone been successful in growing lush cilantro? If so, what are your secrets?

From: Jaime/WildFire Farm <jknoble@INTERSERV.COM>

First, if you want a continuing supply of cilantro, you should succession plant about every 3 weeks. I know you said you've used seed that is hybridized for more leaf growth, but here's the following info anyway.

To the more basic question of bolting - you need to get "slow-bolt" cilantro. There are two types: slow-bolt and regular. The regular is generally grown for seed, hence the speed to seed. The slow-bolt is grown for the leaves like you want. It still bolts pretty fast, though.

That's why the succession planting. I always use Shepherd's (I have no association with them other than as a consumer) because I find I get nearly 100% germination rates & theirs is the slowest to bolt of all I've found. [If anyone's found a slower bolt seed, I'd love to know about it.]

Look at the cilantro in the store, if it has roots attached you will see that it is only 10 - 12" high. It pretty much all bolts just about then. I grow cilantro for commercial use (as well as a lot for my own use) and generally pull it at about 12". I always pull it, not cut it because it keeps much better with the roots on and because it leaves space for the next planting. I do fertilize lightly once just after the first true leaves appear. It grows nicely in sandy loamy soil. I'm experimenting a little this year with light shade to keep it cooler in order to see if I can slow down the bolt even more without losing anything. It works well with lettuce, so I'm giving it a try. I'll let you know my experiment results in a month or so.

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#### 2.8.2 Harvesting coriander / cilantro

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From: dplatt@ntg.com (Dave Platt)

In my experience, the best leaves are the dense, wide ones which grow close to the ground. Once the plant begins to even think about flowering, it throws up a vertical stalk, and starts putting out leaves which are much thinner and lacier. These leaves aren't anywhere near as tasty as the early foliage.

I've heard some people compare the taste of cilantro to Lifebuoy soap. To my taste-buds, the thin upper foliage does somewhat resemble Lifebuoy, and I don't like it at all. The denser low-growing early foliage, on the other hand, is utterly wonderful.

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> OK, my cilantro bolted! Am I going to have to hand pick each of the

little seeds to restock my coriander spice bottle or does someone have an easier way?

From: eberts@donald.uoregon.edu (sonny hays-eberts):

Take a brown paper bag, and place the seed 'umbrella' inside. shake heartily. Repeat for each 'umbrella'. This method is useful to harvest some seed, and keep the rest for hopeful volunteer plants.

For an even easier method, harvest the plant, then beat against the side of a clean trashcan. Most seeds should fall to the bottom. you'll need to clean it a bit, but it's lot easier than hand-picking. This method of course, harvests \*all\* the seed, as opposed to number 1.

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:

It takes coriander about 3 months to produce seed - to get seed on plants grown indoors, grow under plant lights. The best leaves to use are the denser, lower foliage. Once the plant bolts, the lacy upper foliage should not be used, as it is not as tasty. Leaves should be harvested before the plant blooms, or seeds should be harvested when about 2/3 of the seeds have turned a brownish color. Cut the tops of the plant in the early morning while still wet with dew, to prevent the seeds from shattering.

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From: rudy@cae.ca (Rudy Taraschi):

The way I do it is to dry the entire plant, seeds and all. I then get a large paper shopping bag, hold the dried plant by the stem and thrash it around in the bag. Most of the seeds usually fall off if the plant is dry enough.

From: mrooney@mrooney.pn.com (Michael Rooney)

Even better than a paper bag is the feet of panty hose that you or your SO has decided are too far gone to wear any more. They are great for putting over dill and cilantro stems to catch the seed. Just put the toe where the seed head is and a twist tie around the shin part where it is over the stem and you will catch almost every seed.

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2.8.3 Using / preserving cilantro / coriander

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From: snielsen@orednet.org (Susan L. Nielsen)

Not exactly on the matter of etymology, but as to the flavor of cilantro/coriander leaves, Julia Child has said, [pitch voice appropriately high in the head]: "I just can't stand it. It tastes like dirt." Other interpretations invoke soap. I find it quite fresh in flavor, and even take it straight off the plant in the garden. Of course, I nibble a lot of things as I dig, but cilantro is definitely one I enjoy. No accounting for taste.

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From: nancy\_moote@sunshine.net (Nancy Moote)

Cilantro goes to seed very quickly. You can eat the flowers, though. They taste like the leaves but lighter and sweeter. Or let them develop seed for baking, pickling, curries, and planting next year.

They grow so fast that you can plant seeds now for more leaf cilantro later this summer. Next year maybe try planting a few seeds every 2 weeks for a continuous supply.

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From Jennifer A. Cabbage <fxjac@camelot.acf-lab.alaska.edu>:

Coriander is eaten in salads and as a pot-herb in China, and the leaves are often used in Mexican, Turkish, Indian, and some Chinese foods. Leaves are used in rice dishes, refried beans, salsa, curries, omelets, soups, and salads. The seeds are used for flavoring breads, cookies and cakes, sausage and meat dishes, plum jam, and herb liqueurs.

Leaves contain vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, iron, fiber, niacin, thiamin, and 14-22% protein.

'Lucknow' curry powder

1 oz. ginger, 1 oz. coriander seed, 1 oz. cardamom seed,  
1/4 oz. cayenne powder, 3 oz. turmeric.

#### Spicy Cilantro Butter

3-4 cloves minced garlic, 4 generous tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, 1 or 2 jalapeno peppers or 1 serrano chile- seeded and finely chopped, 1 teaspoon lime zest (peel), 2-3 teaspoons fresh lime juice, salt to taste, crushed dried red chile to taste, 1/4 pound softened unsalted butter (one stick)

Blend all together. Good with grilled or broiled fish, shrimp or steak, pasta, rice, squash, corn, and eggplant. Roll corn on the cob in the butter, then sprinkle with Parmesan and lime juice.

#### Cilantro Salmon

3 to 3 1/2 lbs salmon  
2 to 3 cloves crushed garlic  
2 tsp. fresh grated ginger  
2 to 5 jalapeno peppers, cored, seeded, and chopped  
2 small onions, finely chopped  
2 tomatoes in eighths  
1 bunch of fresh cilantro, finely chopped

Clean salmon, removing the head and tail. In a bowl mix together the remaining ingredients, reserving 5 tomato wedges, and stuff the fish. Line the fish opening with the remaining tomato wedges. Wrap the fish tightly with foil. Bake at 450 degrees F. for 10 minutes per inch of thickness of fish or barbecue over hot coals.

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From Alisa Norvelle <NORVELLE@uga.cc.uga.edu>:

When I buy cilantro for whatever reason, I often have much of the bunch leftover. This is an easy way to keep from wasting it:

Remove the leaves from the bunch of cilantro. Mash them in a mortar and pestle with cloves of garlic & salt. The ratio is up to you. I usually use about 2 cloves of garlic with 1/2 teaspoon of salt and as much cilantro as I can cram into the base of the pestle/mortar without making a mess.

Once you have this paste, you can roll it in saran wrap and freeze it, slicing off whatever you need for a particular dish.

Two uses for this stuff (measurements are approximations):

#### Lebanese Sauteed Potatoes

2-3 potatoes, diced  
2-3 T of cilantro pesto stuff  
olive oil  
vegetable oil

Dice the potatoes small enough so that they fry fairly quickly, e.g., about the size of one of the keys on your keyboard.

Fry them in the vegetable oil. Remove and drain them as they get done. Drain the vegetable oil from the pan and add just a tablespoon or two of olive oil. Return the potatoes to the pan with the cilantro pesto. Just saute until everything's a good serving temperature.

This never fails to be a crowd-pleaser. Folks will go \*nuts\* over it! And no, it is not a part of your fat-free diet.

Lubieh (another Lebanese dish, I don't know how to write it)

I make this vegetarian style. But this is the traditional way:  
1/4 lb meat  
1 lb green beans  
cilantro pesto stuff  
olive oil  
Lemon juice

Dice the meat into bite-size chunks. Cook it in a sauce pan until it is good and done--no pink. Add the green beans and a bit of olive oil. Cook them on a low heat until they begin to exude water. Add the cilantro pesto in about the last 5-10 minutes of cooking. Squeeze about a half a lemon onto the meat & beans.

Even prepared the meat-eater way, the amount of meat in this dish is small for what most Americans-I-know think is a normal meat/vegetable ratio. Eat

it as a meal unto itself or with rice, using pita bread as your eating utensil.

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2.8.4 Which coriander / cilantro do you have?

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From: dplatt@ntg.com (Dave Platt)

There's the "slow-bolting" or "leaf" cilantro, and the coriander - they're the same species, but they're different strains selected for different growth characteristics. Leaf cilantro grows more of the low, dense foliage, and it's not as eager to bolt to seed as is commercial seed-coriander stock.

Culantro

From: endothyra@athens.net (Dennis O'Connell)

Also known as Puerto Rican coriander or spiny coriander. Leaves are 4 - 8 inches long, strap-like with serrated edges, very different from typical coriander. Taste is similar to (but much stronger than) cilantro.

From: afn23664@afn.org (Ray A. Orosz)

Finally, my culantro (*Eryngium Foetidum*) woke up! I let some of it bolt, (Oh, boy does it bolt!), after the little flowers went away, I'm left with something cone-like where the flowers were. It appears they may be seeds, but I'm not sure. I'm also starting to get tired to get stung with the prickles around it every time I check to see what's happening. Are they seeds, or should I just cut them out and send them up the river? Exactly, how does this thing reproduce?

From: Rastapoodle@newsguy.com (Rastapoodle)

Culantro has vicious seed heads, with prickles like hypodermic needles. The seeds are within that nasty seed head. I just snip them off after they open and collect the seed. Cutting off the seed heads as soon as they form (early flowering stage) will result in lusher plants that spread faster.

From: Tristan Hatton-Ellis <Tristan.Hatton-Ellis@bris.ac.uk>

Eryngiums come from the same family (Umbelliferae, which also includes Carrots, Fennel & Queen Anne's Lace), but most Eryngiums are spiny and grown for ornamental reasons; the flowerheads are usually surrounded by several large spiny bracts which are often an attractive shade of metallic blue, silver or purple. Yours seems to be seeding very early, but then you are in a pretty warm climate! The cone-like structure is the seedhead, and is the best way of propagating Eryngiums. When it is dry the whole thing can be picked and the seeds shaken out. Fresh seed should germinate quite quickly; if you leave it it may need a period of cold to encourage germination.

Alternatively, you can take root cuttings, but since the plants dislike disturbance this is best done in early spring so the plants can establish again before summer.

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Vietnamese Coriander

From: Rastapoodle@newsguy.com (Anya)

Vietnamese Coriander (*Polygonum odoratum*) is a low-growing spreading plant with tender stems and small light green leaves, and resembles a wandering Jew (*Transcendica* spp.). It has a pungent smell, not like coriander/cilantro at all. It likes wet, semi-shady locales.

It is used in Vietnamese cooking, in soups, stir-frys, etc. I have made a delicious vinegar with it. Too bad mine died, and I can't get it anymore. It is believed to be an aphrodisiac, and the Buddhist monks use it a lot for this reason.

I don't know if it is a perennial in cold climates, better to pot it up and bring it indoors, as it is tropical.

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## 2.9 The mints

Latin names:

The mints: *Mentha* sp.

Peppermint: *Mentha x piperita* (*Mentha aquatica* x *M. spicata*)

Spearmint: *Mentha x spicata* (*Mentha longifolia* x *M. suaveolens*)

Pennyroyal: *Mentha pulegium*

These might not be up to date as botanists make a hobby out of changing Latin names for *Mentha* genera.

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### 2.9.1 Growing mint

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From: skifast123@aol.com (SkiFast123)

When you move spearmint, trust me and only transplant it into a container of some sort. You can bury the container if you want. Good containers to use are those big multi-gallon types that roses come in. Bury it right up to the rim. Otherwise, in a few years, you will have only one herb in your garden and that is mint because it is VERY invasive.

From: Gary & Jeanne Ross <ross@together.net>

Spearmint will keep spreading unless you start pulling some of it out by the roots. We however have let it and several other mints spread thruout the lawn. It smells so great when you walk across it.

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### 2.9.3 Using / preserving mints

Also see 4.6.2, Flower / herb syrup.

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>I've got way too much peppermint / mint / spearmint ...:

\* From: hattie@netcom.com (Susan Hattie Steinsapir)

Make a simple sugar syrup and add a whole lot of fresh mint to it. Use this when making granita or to sweeten sun tea. Lemonade made with the mint syrup would be nice, too.

\* I like to make iced tea heavily minted. Steep a whole lot of mint with the tea bags. Or better yet, boil them with the tea water, then add

the tea and steep. Discard the leaves.

- \* Make cold Asian type noodle salads with finely chopped mint added. I use mint to line a bowl in which I'm serving fresh whole strawberries. Don't see why you couldn't use them to line a bowl in which a fruit salad will be served. Melon salad would be nice.
- \* Some middle eastern dishes call for lamb and mint. Ground lamb and finely chopped fresh mint (and a few other goodies) would make interesting meat balls.
- \* Use it in flower arrangements. I've put rosemary branches and mint leaves together when I wanted something but hadn't picked up any fresh flowers.
- \* Give it away to your friends!

From: lebasil@ag.arizona.edu (Leslie Basel)

You also might want to preserve it in vodka or aquavit...

From: asnell@interaccess.com (Amy Snell)

Boil a handful of peppermint leaves in a pot of water, strain it, add sugar and serve over ice ... wonderful peppermint drink -- tastes a lot like candy canes, but very summery. Also good hot. Leftovers can be frozen in an ice cube tray and popped into iced tea to make it minty.

From: thavey@boi.hp.com (Tom Havey):

- \* Pesto....a bunch of peppermint leaves, some peppermint or walnut oil, a bit of sugar, all whipped up in a food processor.
- \* Dried, put in decorative jars for gifts, or mixed in some homemade potpourri stuff.
- \* Tea.
- \* Raviolis stuffed with peppermint, pepper and raisins and a bit of goat cheese (or cottage cheese) topped with a light and spicy curry sauce.

From: libby@igc.apc.org (Libby Goldstein)

Just add it to water or seltzer, crush it a bit and serve over ice. It's lovely.

From: jrogow@ridgecrest.ca.us (Judith Rogow)

Mint planted at the kitchen door keeps ants away.

From: MORAVCSIK@clipr.Colorado.EDU (Julia Moravcsik)

- \* You can make tabouleh with the mint.
- \* You can boil water with sugar and dip the leaves in for crystallized mint leaves.
- \* You can freeze them for later use.
- \* You can make a sort of pesto by putting them in a blender with some oil and then freezing the pesto for later use.
- \* You can put it in fruit salad, chopped fine.
- \* You can chomp on a leaf before you drink water to make the water taste better.



From: sgoddik@sunflowr.usd.edu (Steen Goddik)

One of our friends describes chocolate-mint leaves (a variety of mint that has a taste of chocolate to it) as a great "social lubricant" for her 5-year old son. All the neighbor kids love it, and it has made him rather popular.

From: snielsen@orednet.org (Susan L. Nielsen)

Tea from spearmint is a pretty usual solution; I find it perkier than peppermint. It also makes a terrific addition to iced tea made from regular black tea. We make what is conventionally called sun tea by the gallons all year 'round, though without the sun. Seven tea bags (good ol' Lipton's or Red Rose) steeped all day in a gallon jug of water will make good tea for icing with or without Sol. Use the spearmint fresh, or dry it, or freeze it in baggies. I also add it to raspberry leaf tea (calcium boost) because the raspberry has very little flavor of its own. Straight mint tea is good for bad tummies.

From: Don Wiss (no email address given)

Looking it up in my Wise Encyclopedia of Cookery I find: candied mint leaves, mint butter, mint ice, mint jelly, mint julep, mint mousse, mint sauce, mint syrup, mint wafers, and sprigs in the ice tea.

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From: jmanton@standard.com (Jeanne Manton):

Mint allegedly has a root system extending 18 - 22 inches beneath the plant. I had mint planters built 18 inches x 18 inches x 26 inches deep. The mint hadn't read the same book because you always can tell where I have been living - yep, mint sprouts! This year the apple mint drowned and froze so I replaced it with pineapple mint - very pretty variegated leaves I use with cut flowers. When I made my mint jelly for the year I used the pineapple mint with crushed pineapple. This was supposed to be Christmas presents but ..... oh, well, I will have another crop shortly.

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From: awoods@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu (Alan Woods)

This is from Erica Klein's \_Skinny Spices\_:

Moroccan Mint Blend

2 T dried mint leaves  
2 T garlic granules or powder  
2 T toasted sesame seeds  
1/2 T lemon peel  
1/2 T onion flakes

She uses this as a rub, as flavor for a yoghurt-based soup, and as the main ingredient in marinade.

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Spicy Mint tea

From: DonW1948@aol.com

6 c Water  
2 Cinnamon sticks  
4 Clove, whole  
4 Allspice, whole  
2 c Mint leaves

Bring the water, cinnamon, cloves and allspice to a boil. Boil for 1 minute. Stir in mint leaves. Remove from heat and steep for five minutes. Strain into cups.  
From Taste of Home Magazine.

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Orange Mint Vinegar

From: DonW1948@aol.com

1 sm Orange; peel; thin spiral - colored portion only  
1/2 c Mint leaves; fresh  
Vinegar, white

Remove peel (colored portion only) from 1 small orange in a thin spiral, and place in a sterilized pint jar. Lightly bruise 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, add to jar. Heat apple cider or distilled white vinegar to just below the boiling point. Fill jar with vinegar, and cap tightly. Allow to stand 3 to 4 weeks. Strain vinegar, discarding peel and mint. Pour vinegar into a clean sterilized jar, adding a new sprig of fresh mint, if desired. Seal tightly. Use in dressing for tossed green salads with orange and grapefruit sections, or in marinades for chicken or lamb chops.

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Mint jelly, apple based

From sherae@zeta.org.au (Sheri McRae):

4 lb. tart apples  
3 cups strong mint water  
2 cups white vinegar  
sugar

To make the mint water, soak a large quantity of mint (about a pound) in 3 cups boiling water overnight. Next day, chop apples and place in a pan, and barely cover with water. Cover and simmer about an hour until apples are soft. Strain. Combine apple juice, mint water, and vinegar and strain again. Measure and place in a pan, adding cup for cup of sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Bring to boiling and cook rapidly until the jelly will set. Bottle and seal. Mint Jelly is good with meats, especially lamb and is also good on toast, etc.

I haven't tried this recipe but it came from a reliable preserving book which I have used and like.

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## Mint jelly

From mcat@epix.net (Molly)

I've made mint jelly from my prolific mint patch. I didn't use any apple juice base, just boiled the crushed leaves in water, strained, added sugar and pectin. I think the recipe came in the pectin box, they've got an 800 number there also for other recipes. There's also a recipe in my WD Encyclopedia of Cookery:

1 1/2 cups firmly packed fresh mint leaves and stems  
2 1/4 cups water  
2 Tbs strained fresh lemon juice  
Green food coloring  
3 1/2 cups sugar  
1/2 bottle liquid pectin (nowadays that means one pouch Certo)

Wash mint, put in large saucepan, crush with masher or drinking glass. Add water and bring to a boil. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 10 min. Strain, measure 1 2/3 cups into large saucepan. Add lemon juice and a few drops of food coloring. Stir in sugar, bring to a full boil over high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in pectin, bring to a full rolling boil, boil for 1 min. Remove from heat, skim, pour into hot jars, and seal.

If you're looking for other ways to use mint leaves, you can candy them and use them for garnishes on cakes. Dry them and add an interesting taste while cooking lamb or pork. Mint and Elderberry flower is supposed to be a great combination for fighting colds and flu. Mint is very calming to an upset stomach, as well as freshening the breath.

Try mint jelly once, at least, to see for yourself if it's worth it. Good luck.

Molly

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From: Leslie <duncan@ISYS.CA>:

I like mint in Middle-Eastern salads. Tabouleh & Fattoush both use up a lot of mint & taste great.

## Tabouleh

3/4 cup bulgur (cracked wheat) medium or fine.  
3/4 cup water  
2 large bunches parsley  
large bunch mint  
4 green onions  
juice of 2 lemons  
1 1/2 teasp. salt  
1/4 cup olive oil  
2 large, ripe tomatoes

(Note to Chileheads: we usually add about 3 chopped Habs, & a teasp. of Tabasco to this salad.)

Place cracked wheat and water in a large bowl and set aside to soak for one hour.

Meanwhile stem off the parsley, mint and onions and wash thoroughly. Chop very fine.

Squeeze cracked wheat between the hands to remove excess water. Return to the bowl and add the greens. Add lemon juice, salt and olive oil, adjusting the amounts to your liking. Sometimes two or three tastings are called for until the right balance is acquired. Dice one tomato and add it to the salad. Slice the second tomato to use in decorating the dish.

You may want to serve Tabouleh on a bed of lettuce.

Tabouleh is usually scooped or spooned onto Romaine lettuce leaves and then eaten. I find this a bit messy, so I prefer eating it with a spoon.

Makes 4-6 servings. From Nadia Farah's Cooking the Middle Eastern Way.

#### Fattoush (Middle Eastern bread salad)

2 large stale pita breads, torn into 1 in. pieces

1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1 lb ripe tomatoes (about 3) seeded and cut into 1/2 inch cubes

6 green onions, cut into 1/4 inch slices

1 green bell pepper, cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley

1/3 cup coarsely chopped fresh mint

2 large cloves garlic, minced

1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Spread the torn pita on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until dry, 10-15 minutes. Cool.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the cucumbers, tomatoes, green onions, green pepper, parsley, & mint.

Whisk together the garlic, lemon juice and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Toss this dressing with the vegetables. Toss in the bread. Spread on a serving platter, serves 6-8.

#### Salatat Laban (Yogurt Salad)

2 cups natural yogurt

1/2 large cucumber, finely diced

2 teasp. mint finely chopped

salt

1/4 clove garlic, crushed

Add the other ingredients to yogurt. Stir until smooth. This is a refreshing salad on hot days, & a nice accompaniment to sandwiches. Makes 4 small servings.

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2.9.4 Which mint do you have?

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Also see the Monarda / Beebalm entry, as this plant is often used like the mints: 2.24 below.

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From: conrad@richters.com (Conrad Richter)

Mints - *Mentha* spp.

Seeds -- Do not buy

The best mints cannot be grown from seeds. They are propagated asexually either by cuttings or division. Often seeds are offered in catalogues or in seed racks, but the plants that grow from these will be inferior rogues not worth the bother. The flavour and odour may have some degree of menthol, but the mix of oils is almost always a disappointment to anyone who has enjoyed the fresh, clean scents and flavours from a good spearmint or a good peppermint.

Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) is a natural hybrid, probably between watermint (*M. aquatica*) and spearmint (*M. spicata*). Its flowers are sterile and so are incapable of producing true peppermint seeds. What is usually sold as "peppermint" seeds is actually a type of spearmint. The highest and best use of this rogue mint is for medicinal tea, but it is not nearly as nice as true peppermint.

Even though spearmint flowers are fertile and are capable of producing seeds, seeds produce disappointing results. In most cases seeds bought as "spearmint" will turn out to be the same menthol-smelling variety sold as "peppermint."

Why does the seed industry continue to sell mint seeds? For years the seed industry has had little interest and expertise in herbs. Herbs tended to be sidelines that produced profits and as long as people continued to buy, the industry did not care. This is true of oregano and remains true of other herbs as well.

There are some mints, however, that can be grown true from seeds. Watermint (*M. aquatica*), apple mint (*M. suaveolens*), corn mint (*M. arvensis*) and pennyroyal mint (*M. pulegium*) all grow from seeds.

But for the beginning herb gardener who just wants one mint for tea and perhaps one for lamb chops, it is better to get plants. There are many good quality spearmint strains and hybrids including English mint, improved spearmint, curled spearmint and the plain Jane, regular spearmint. Among the peppermints, the most commonly available variety is black peppermint (*M. x piperita vulgaris*), but there are others, like the new "chocolate mint" which, incidentally, some swear really has a "hint" of chocolate in its aroma profile.

When buying plants beware of the impostor mints grown from seeds. Just because mint plants are offered for sale in a reputable garden centre does not mean that the cultivar offered is a good one. Many large growers are growing mints from the same rogue seed varieties sold by the seed industry.

Always let your nose be the judge; and don't be afraid to squeeze a leaf to allow the scent to escape into the air.

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End of part 2 of 7

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