

CULANTRO

Spiny Coriander, Sawtooth Coriander

Eryngium foetidum

Apiaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Culantro is a biennial or short-lived perennial native to tropical America. It is grown mainly for its leaves which are used as a culinary herb in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Plants grow 8 to 40 cm tall with leaves arranged in a spiral pattern around a central stem. Leaves are 5-32 cm in length, 1-4 cm wide, with small spines along margin. They have a similar aroma as cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*).

Uses

The aromatic leaves are used in cooking, in condiments, and medicinally (many uses including treatment for fever and flu).

Common Names

- Haitian Creole
 - coulante
- Spanish
 - Recao

Cultivation

- **Elevation** – up to 1700 m
- **Rainfall** – requires watering or rainfall to maintain moist conditions
- **Soil Types** – prefers fertile, well-drained soil with pH 6-7.8
- **Temperature Range** – intolerant of frost; seeds germinate well in 24°C soil
- **Day Length Sensitivity** – flowering is initiated by increasing day length
- **Light** – prefers partial shade

Culantro is typically propagated from seed, but will also grow from cuttings. Seeds are very small and should therefore be sown on moist soil with little or no covering. Seeds germinate three to four weeks after sowing. Thin as needed to result in 12 to 15 cm between plants. To prolong and maximize leaf production, grow the plants under shade, fertilize the soil, and prune the flower heads. Culantro grows well in containers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Harvest the most tender leaves, leaving three topmost leaves intact. The leaves can be harvested every one to two weeks until flowering begins. The leaves wilt quickly so should be used soon after harvest. Leaves are added to soups and curries and as an ingredient in salsa and seasonings (e.g., *sofrito* or *recaito* in Puerto Rico). Seeds should be harvested and stored when mature/dry. Harvesting prevents unwanted volunteer plants that grow as a result of seeds that fall to the ground.

Pests and Diseases

It is largely pest free. Root-knot nematodes may become a problem over time.

Cooking and Nutrition

Culantro is used as a seasoning for vegetables, sauces, meats, soups, and chutneys. It is often used interchangeably with cilantro. Culantro is a good source of calcium, iron, vitamin A, and riboflavin.

References

Ramcharan, C. 1999. [Culantro: A much utilized, little understood herb](#). p. 506–509. In: J. Janick (ed.), Perspectives on new crops and new uses. ASHS Press, Alexandria, VA.