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To Grow a Great Garden, Start with Fantastic Seeds.....

How To Grow Bulb Fennel From Seed

Start bulb fennel seeds indoors in early spring, about 8 weeks before your last frost, and set them out under cloches when they have one true leaf. When growing fennel, prepare a fertile, well-drained bed in a spot that is convenient to water, because bulb fennel must have moist soil. Mix a standard application of a balanced organic fertilizer into the soil before setting out plants.

Fennel seeds also may be **sown directly** where they are to grow about three weeks before your last spring frost date. Space plants at least 12 inches apart. Start seeds for a fall planting of bulb fennel in midsummer, and set them out about 8 weeks before your first fall frost date. When growing fennel in fall, harvest bulbs before they are damaged by hard freezes.

For recommended planting dates for your local climate — and to design your garden beds — try our [Vegetable Garden Planner](#).

Keep bulb fennel seedlings carefully weeded, and drench plants with a liquid organic fertilizer when they are 12 inches tall. In late spring or early summer, mulch bulb fennel with grass clippings or another organic mulch to retain soil moisture, an essential factor in growing big, crisp bulbs. However, mulching too early can delay soil warming and invite problems with slugs. When growing fennel, do not allow the plants to run dry once bulb formation has begun.

Begin **harvesting** fennel bulbs as you can use them in the kitchen after the bulbs are more than 2 inches across. Bulb fennel plants grown in spring do not get extremely large, and should be harvested before the weather turns hot. If you cut the bulb high, so that the root and the base of the bulb remain in the soil, the stub will regrow a couple of small crowns with miniature fennel fronds — nice little tidbits to include in packets of frozen garden veggie mixtures.

With half of their tops trimmed off, fennel bulbs will keep in plastic bags in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks. Excess bulb fennel can be blanched and frozen.