

Florence Fennel—*Foeniculum vulgare* var. *azoricum* (Mill.) Thell.¹

James M. Stephens²

Florence fennel is also known as finocchio, sweet fennel, sweet anise, and fetticus. It is grown successfully in many gardens and a few fields throughout Florida.

Description

The plant is an annual that is planted for the thickened bulb-like base of the leaf stems. These make a swollen, oval, 3 or 4 inch wide structure just above the ground. Some gardeners pull soil up around the developing bulbous base to blanch (whiten) it, but this practice is not necessary.

Use and Culture

Fennel has a very aromatic, distinctive anise-like flavor and odor. It is used as a boiled vegetable, and sometimes raw in salads or with other vegetables. Plants grow about 3 feet tall. The dense and thread-like foliage reminds one of dog fennel. Florence fennel appears somewhat similar to celery and it is often confused with dill. From seeding to harvest takes about 4 months. Cool weather is best for growth of fennel.



Figure 1. Florence fennel
Credits: James M. Stephens

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