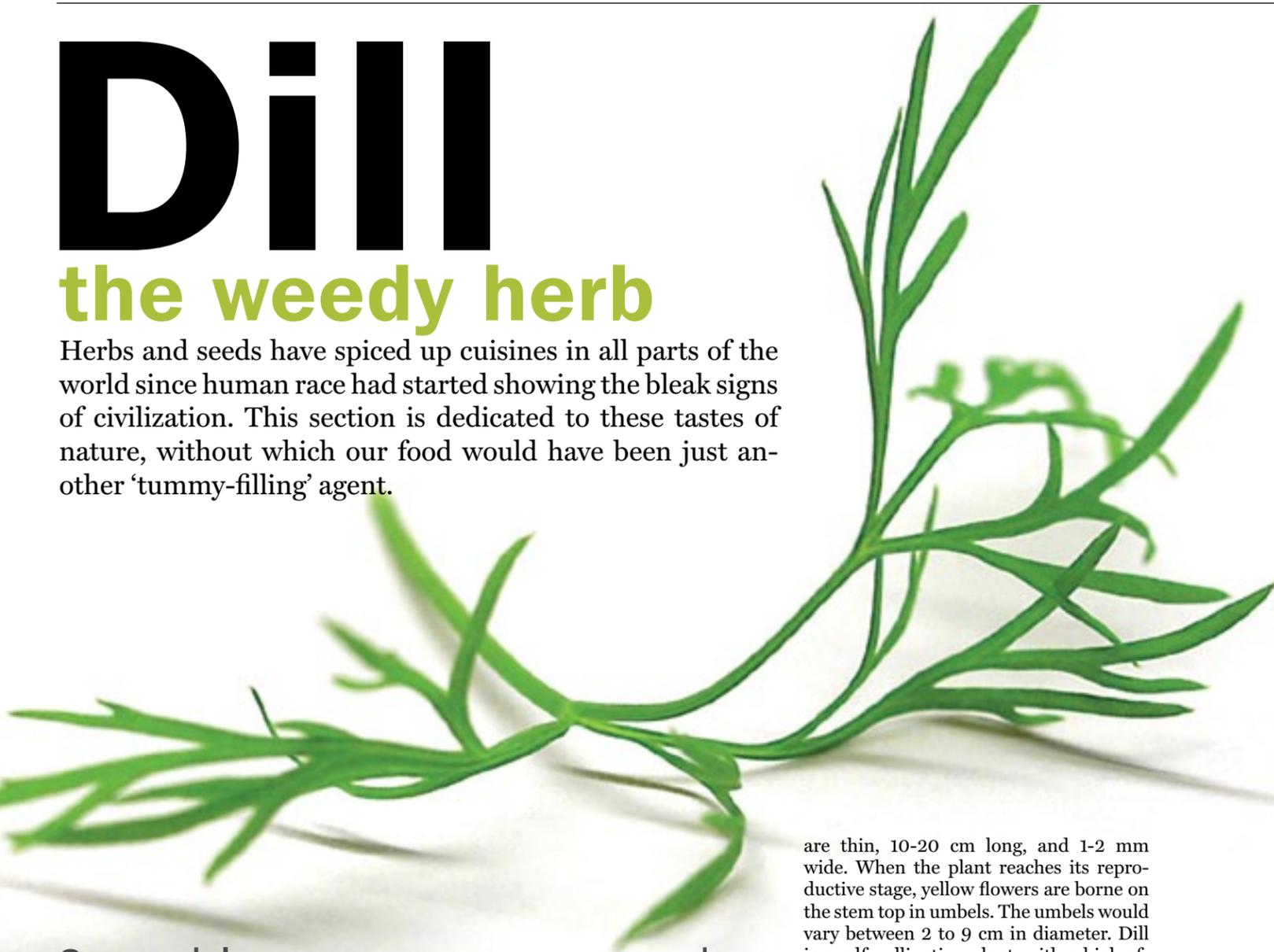


Dill

the weedy herb

Herbs and seeds have spiced up cuisines in all parts of the world since human race had started showing the bleak signs of civilization. This section is dedicated to these tastes of nature, without which our food would have been just another ‘tummy-filling’ agent.



Sprinkle your recipes with a heightened flavor

Dill, a popular flavoring herb used in many places across the world, is a geographical offspring of the eastern landmass of the globe like the Mediterranean area and the south of Russia. Today, there is almost no habitation left out that knows, admires and uses this weak-legged herb in a variety of innovative flavor combinations. And it is not just a flavoring agent! It has been used for medicinal purposes as well since history began its conception! Let's start venturing into the Dill world.

Getting acquainted

Dill is a humble part of the home garden that world peck its head to a maximum of 40-60 cm, and this figure goes for those varieties which have taken the shrewdest advantage of the land, air, water and light conditions they have been grown in. It is a weak-stemmed plant that would require fairly sunny conditions to grow into an amazing crop.

Surfacing a slender stem, alternate leaves would be borne till the tip of the stem is touched for flower development. Leaves

are thin, 10-20 cm long, and 1-2 mm wide. When the plant reaches its reproductive stage, yellow flowers are borne on the stem top in umbels. The umbels would vary between 2 to 9 cm in diameter. Dill is a self-pollinating plant, with a high affinity to get cross-pollinated when planted along with related varieties like coriander and fennel, cultivated within reachable distances. The propagation is done by media like the wind and bees. So it is apparent that any other related variety planted within a diameter less than half a kilometer, increases the incidences of cross-pollinated varieties, which are often horrible even to sniff, leave apart using in the culinary! To prevent this, it is wise to avoid any brethren standing closely around the dill-cultivated bed.

Health facts

Every part of this herb, except for the stem, is useful in some form or the other in different varieties of food cooked the world over. Besides being an important condiment for dishes, mainly including

fish and meat, a handful of the herb and its seed can actually be a potent source of many nutrients. Vitamin A and D are present in wholesome fractions in a hundred grams of dill leaves, when consumed raw with salads and meat.

Dill leaves are a potent source of antioxidants. Micronutrients like Niacin and Pyridoxine are present in plenty. Dill seeds are an excellent source of dietary fibers, thus lending it the important attribute of being a cholesterol control agent. The seeds contain essential oils like eugenol, dillapiol and limonene. These oils have therapeutic properties such as anesthetics and anti-septic, anti-spasmodic, carminative, digestive, disinfective and sedative. These properties make dill oil an important constituent of the medical basket. Eugenol is also known to keep blood sugar levels under tight control. So, a mouthful of dill seeds, chewed every day after a meal, should be a painless pursuit for those tormented under the medical pressure of being a diabetic.

Dill seeds cure hiccups! Next time you face a sweaty round of hiccups, take in a mouthful of dill seeds.

Besides this, it can be an important diet constituent for lactating mothers, babies and for frequent sufferers of headaches and nervous irritability. And if these uses are too complicated, and a more general usage is required, then it is good to know that dill seeds soaked in water for 20 or 25 minutes, release some of the essential chemical components into water. Most importantly, the calcium content of the seed faces leeching out. Fingers dipped into this water helps strengthen nails. Chewing the seeds raw helps strengthen teeth and jaw bones.

Part specific uses

Basically, we use everything out of a dill crop, but for the stems. The reason is that the stem is the part with the least proportion of flavor. The aroma increases in orders as we move ahead in the ladder starting with the leaves, the flowers and finally, the seeds.

Seeds:

Seeds are the ones that are used as ground condiments in recipes. The dill seeds are 1-2 mm in length, having a slightly curved longitudinal structure, ridged all over the body. As stated earlier, dill seeds are potent sources of essential oils. This makes them the most important part of the dill-

Botanical Classification:

There are two varieties of Dill that are widely known and used. An American variety and an Indian variety. While the American variety is known for its strong aroma, the Indian counterpart is more decent as far as the intensity of aroma is considered. It grows fairly well in both the eastern and western parts of the globe, the Indian variety being a dwarf form of the American one. Due to its stronger flavor, the American Dill is widely used as a garnishing for non-vegetarian dishes. Both are classified as under:

Botanical Classification

		American Dill	Indian Dill
1	Kingdom	Plantae	Plantae
2	Division	Magnoliophyta	Magnoliophyta
3	Class	Magnoliopsida	Magnoliopsida
4	Order	Apiales	Apiales
5	Family	Apiaceae	Apiaceae
6	Genus	Anethum	Anethum
7	Species	Graveolens	Sowa

body. Dill seeds are consumed raw or as spicing agents in food. In some parts of the world, these are soaked in water, and the water is then consumed as a concoction. Dill seeds can be stored in air-tight containers for a long period of time, ranging from days to months. The whole seeds retain their flavor very well while the grounded form tends to lose its aroma in a shorter duration of time. Hence it is a practiced pursuit to store the whole seeds and hand-grind them whenever needed.

The herb was a witchcraft essential at some point in time in history

Leaves

Since the leaves fall under the least flavored parts, they are used in to lend a mild aromatic tinge to salads. When it comes to the garnishing of fish dishes, a larger bunch is required. Many parts of the world, that are primarily non-vegetarian in their food habits, partake of the flavoring characteristics of this herb. Soups and desserts, mainly including apples as a core ingredient, use dill leaves, butchered into micro-pieces. Dill leaves are also used to make a light-flavored tea variety, again to be used as a medical concoction.

Flowers

Dill flowers find a widespread use in pickles. It is also used for garnishing purposes in some dishes. Other than this, dill flow-

ers do not have much of a culinary utilization.

Growth requirements

There is a reason; this herb is called a weed. It happily grows wherever and however it is grown. All that a crop of dill requires is a plenty of sunlight. Still, it is grown as a fond crop in gardens and containers. While growing a dill bunch, it should be taken care that no related family plant is grown within half a kilometer area. They cross pollinate, giving a horror face to the crop. A porous soil is the perfect ground condition and the plantation should be watered regularly. It should get a full supply of sunlight throughout its growing period. The height of the plant is a factor of the sunlight received. If there is any compromise on the sunlight factor, plants display a dwarfed growth pattern. The flavor and the nutritional values are however not compromised on. A constant supply of water is usually required. Dill seeds are sown in the early spring, at a depth of half an inch in the soil, one seed planted 4 inches from the other. The location where the seeds are sown, should feature at least half a day of sunlight and should be sheltered from winds. The dill stems are fragile and even the slightest gush of wind sets it swaying. After two and a half weeks of the initial sowing, the dill plantlets are shifted 9 inches apart from each other. The plants grow to

full bloom by the middle of summer. It is better harvest the crop when flowers have started showing the initial signs of pollinative after-effects. It is a general trend that flowers stop the development of leaves. However, for those who are more interested in the foliage for use in salads and garnishing, it would be a useful tip to learn that pinching off the flowers, encourages the growth of leaves. However, continuing this process might just spindle out the crop!

Harvesting

It is a general trend to shave off the plants from the ground on the first appearances of flower heads. This yields a good crop of green dill foliage. Dill leaves do not have a very impressive shelf-life. They need to be consumed fresh, or can be store up to an extended period of a day, when refrigerated in a zipper pouch. Removal of seeds is often an issue. It is better to remove the seeds from the flower-heads when they turn brown. A crop of dill yields seeds which can support the life of 12 other future dill croppings. Flowers and seeds are important ingredients in pickles. Dill seeds are dried before they are shelved.

S.No	Nutrient	Composition	
1	Energy	180 kJ (43 kcal)	
2	Carbohydrates	7 g	
3	Dietary fiber	2.1 g	
4	Fat	1.1 g	
5	Protein	3.5 g	
6	Vitamin A	7717	154% IU
7	Thiamine (vit. B1)	0.1 mg	9%
8	Riboflavin (vit. B2)	0.3 mg	25%
9	Niacin (vit. B3)	1.6 mg	11%
10	Pantothenic acid (B5)	0.4 mg	8%
11	Vitamin B6	0.2 mg	15%
12	Folate (vit. B9)	150 µg	38%
13	Vitamin B12	0 µg	0%
14	Vitamin C	85 mg	102%
15	Calcium	208 mg	21%
16	Iron	6.6 mg	51%
17	Magnesium	55 mg	15%
18	Manganese	1.3 mg	62%
19	Phosphorus	66 mg	9%
20	Potassium	738 mg	16%
21	Sodium	61 mg	4%
22	Zinc	0.9 mg	9%
23	Copper	0.14 mg	7%

health facts

Per 100 gm mathematics as given by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

