

A better way to grow cilantro



Wouldn't it be nice to have fresh cilantro growing right outside your kitchen door? Whenever you wanted to fix Mexican salsa or guacamole, or a Middle Eastern yogurt sauce for your lamb kabobs, there the lacy, sweetly pungent leaves would be, ready to harvest.

But if you've ever tried to grow it, you've probably noticed that cilantro yields a fast crop; plants are barely up before they try to flower and set seeds. So those tasty leaves aren't around long, especially in warm weather.

To keep leaves coming, you can sow seeds every two weeks for a continuous cilantro crop. Or, even better, try the method we perfected in *Sunset's* test garden last year: Grow cilantro as you would mesclun.

Sow seeds thickly in a wide, shallow container; then, as soon as plants are 3 to 4 inches tall and sporting a couple of cuttable leaves, use scissors to cut off some foliage for cooking as shown.

Shear from a different section of the container every time, rotating the pot as you go and never letting plants in any area mature. By the time you get back to the first section harvested, new leaves will have appeared.

Cilantro growing tips

- Select a bowl-shaped container at least 18 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches deep.
- Fill the pot with a fast-draining potting soil; mix in an organic granular fertilizer.

- Before seeding, moisten the soil using a fine spray from the hose. Because the seeds are fairly small, mix them in a bowl with sand (3 parts sand to 1 part seed) so they'll disperse more evenly. Sow the seeds, then cover lightly with soil.
- Gently mist the soil so as not to displace the seeds.
- Place containers in full sun or, if you live in a hot climate, light shade. Seeds should germinate in 7 to 10 days.
- Harvest at least weekly to keep leaves coming. Using this method, it's possible to harvest four crops of cilantro from a single pot.

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