

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

By Beverly Wickersham

“DILL: 2010 HERB OF THE YEAR”

All members of the International Herb Association are invited to participate in the selection process for the Herb of the Year. The selections are made based on the herb's outstanding performance in as least two of three major categories: medicinal, culinary, and decorative. The Herb of the Year for 2010 is Dill (*Anethum graveolens*), a member of the carrot or parsley family called Apiaceae, formerly known as Umbelliferae. The specific epithet “*graveolens*” means “strong scented.” The common name “dill” is derived from the Norse word *dilla* meaning “to soothe” or “to lull.” This annual, a native of Europe, is one of our most popular and useful herbs.

Medicinal Uses: 1. Both the Dill fruit and oil of Dill possess stimulant, aromatic, carminative, and stomachic properties making them highly valuable for medicinal use. Dill is still current in the British Herbal Pharmacopoeia for the use in treating wind, colic and indigestion. “Dilly” pillows, made from lavender and dill, helped encourage sleep for European children with their fragrance. The Pioneer settlers of North America gave their children dill seed to chew throughout long sermons in church, thus earning it the nickname *meetin’* seed.

Culinary Uses: Dill seeds and leaves are widely used in pickling cucumbers. However, Dill is also added to soups, sauces, dips, and salads, and used as a flavoring for some breads, cakes, and pastries. It has a special affinity for fish, egg, and potato dishes.

Decorative Uses: Stems of dill, especially if the yellow dill flowers are in bloom, make attractive additions to flower arrangements. However, another very important contribution has nothing to do with the uses listed by the International Herb Association. Dill is a major “host” plant for the larvae stage of the Swallow-Tail Butterfly.

Planting Dill:

This annual enjoys full sun and protection from wind.

Plant seed or transplants in early spring and every two weeks thereafter to have a continuous succession of plants.

Because Dill is a cool-weather plant, seed can also be sown in the fall for an additional crop.

Harvest/Storage

Cut and gather the leaves to use fresh. As the seeds turn brown, cut off the tops of the plant and hang the branches upside down in a paper bag to catch the seed.

Have any questions? Contact Bell County Master gardeners at the county extension office or email to ask.bcmga@gmail.com

