# BRONZE FENNEL
*Foeniculum vulgare*





## Characteristics

- Type: Herb
- Zone: 4-9
- Height: 1-2 Feet
- Bloom Time: Mid to late summer
- Bloom Description: Yellow
- Sun: Full
- Water: Medium
- Maintenance:
- Leaf: Dark Green or Bronze, Fragrant
- Tolerates: Acid soil
- Attracts: Butterflies, Bees, Parasitic Wasps and Hoverflies

## Culture

The dark, fine-textured foliage of this short-lived perennial herb combined with its height (up to 6 feet tall) make it a great background for borders or herb gardens. Foliage is feathery and thin, but dense enough that massed plants form solid dark background. It attracts beneficial insects and feeds the caterpillars that morph into swallowtail butterflies. It adds texture, color, and flavor to your garden. Even if you don't like to cook with it, it's a very attractive plant. Give it full sun in well-drained soil. If it gets too much water or the soil is not draining properly, it is prone to rot. Prefers rich, moist but well-drained soil, but will tolerate drought. Tolerates wide range of pH 4.8 to 8.2. The whole plant is anise-scented, the young foliage having an especially pungent anise-like flavor and fragrance. Dried seed is sweetly fragrant, although fresh seed has a slightly unpleasant smell.

## Noteworthy Characteristics

Spanish explorers of the 1600's knew they would need to bring herb seeds with them to plant in the new world if they wanted to feel truly at home. This is how Sweet Fennel became distributed along El Camino Real or The Kings Highway which connects the 21 missions that span from San Diego to San Francisco, California. A very important host plant for the Anise Swallowtail and the Eastern Black Swallowtail. It somewhat resembles a very large dill plant. It grows to 3-5' (less frequently to 6') tall and features feathery, compound, aromatic, bronze leaves with needle-like segments and tiny yellow flowers in large, flattened, compound umbels. Flowers bloom in mid- to late summer, and are followed by aromatic seeds. Flowers are very attractive to butterflies.

## Problems

No serious insect or disease problems. Stem and root rot may occur, especially in poorly-drained soils. Watch for aphids and slugs. Larvae (caterpillars) of swallowtail butterflies may chew on the foliage. Self-sows and can become a weed problem if not deadheaded. Some seeding is helpful to replace older plants.

## Garden Uses

Borders, vegetable gardens, herb gardens, cottage gardens or meadows. Good plant for a butterfly garden. Seeds are commonly harvested for use as flavoring in a variety of foods such as bakery products or sausages. Chopped leaves may be used as flavoring for salads, potatoes or fish.