

Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare · Apiaceae family

DIFFICULTY Easy
TYPE Annual/short-lived perennial, bulb
MATURITY 12–16 weeks



SUN
Full sun



WATER
Regular



SOIL PH
6.0–7.5



SPACING
25–30cm



DEPTH
0.5cm (seed)

01 Bulb formation

The edible bulb forms at soil level from overlapping, swollen leaf bases — hill soil slightly around the base as it swells to keep it pale and tender.



bulb swells at soil level, hill lightly as it grows

02 Planting

METHOD	Direct sow, as fennel dislikes root disturbance from transplanting.
SOIL	Free-draining, moderately rich. Avoid heavy clay that stays wet.
TIMING	Sow in the cooler months — fennel bolts to seed quickly in long, hot days.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

03 Growing care

- Water consistently — irregular watering encourages premature bolting.
- Hill soil lightly around the swelling bulb to keep it pale and tender.
- Keep well clear of dill in the garden — the two cross-pollinate and can affect flavour.
- Thin seedlings to give bulbs room to properly swell.

04 Problems

- Bolting** — triggered by heat, long daylight, or transplant stress; direct sow and keep water consistent.
- Aphids** — cluster on new growth; hose off or encourage predatory insects.
- Slugs and snails** — attracted to young seedlings; monitor closely early on.
- Poor bulb formation** — often from overcrowding; thin seedlings properly.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Bulb reaches the size of a tennis ball or larger, still firm and pale.
METHOD	Cut at soil level, trimming the fronds off for separate use.
CURING	None needed — use promptly for best texture.
STORAGE	Fridge, in a closed container with a little moisture, 1–2 weeks. Only a couple of days at room temperature.
PRESERVING	See Freezing Produce (blanching and freezing a glut) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY

Lettuce

Cucumber

AVOID NEARBY

Dill

Tomato

Beans

ROTATION NOTE

Fennel can inhibit growth of many nearby plants — often best grown in its own dedicated bed away from other vegetables.