



## Bronze Fennel

*Foeniculum vulgare*  
(fen-IK-yoo-lum vul-GAIR-ee)

**Left:** In bloom

**Center:** Black Swallowtail caterpillar

**Below:** The Black Swallowtail butterfly

Photo by and grown by John Brandauer



**Description:** Bronze Fennel is often grown for its striking ornamental foliage. The leaves, seed and bulb can be used in cooking. We switched to fennel when we could not grow dill fast enough, to feed the Black Swallowtail caterpillars. In 2009, we planted Golden Alexanders *Zizia aurea*, as a native alternative, but have not seen hosting yet.

**Other Names:** Florence fennel, finocchio, anise, sweet fennel

**Type:** Herb      **Family:** Apiaceae/Umbelliferae (carrot Family)      **Life Cycle:** Perennial / biennial

**Native Status:** Mediterranean Invasive to varying degrees throughout the US, especially the west coast.

**Light Requirements:** Full sun, part sun.

**Soil Preference:** Prefers moist, fertile, well-drained soil

**Care:** No special care needed.

**Growth Rate:** Average. May self-sow generously, we mulch heavily and still get a few seedlings.

**Blooms:** Yellow, in late summer, the bloom is not the primary reason to plant this.

**Size:** Two to six feet tall, about a foot and a half wide.

**Natural habitat:** Mediterranean coast

**Wildlife Benefits:** A nectar and pollen source. A host for the Black Swallowtail butterfly.

**Propagation Methods:** Sow seed in the spring 1/8" deep, or start indoors, transplant after frost, avoid disturbance of the taproot. Not a plant to grow in a pot,

**Commercial availability:** Available mail order seeds or plants. Available locally, with the herbs. Several cultivars exist. **UPDATE 1 MAY 2010 Available locally;** Asprocolas Acres offers fine plants, inexpensively at the Millstone Farm Market.

**Fennel Sauce** Try this on your fish.

Ingredients: 1.5 oz butter, 1 heaped tablespoon Chopped Fennel, 1 oz Plain Flour, 1.75 cups Water

Melt two thirds of the butter and cook the fennel in it for about 30 seconds. Blend in the flour and gradually add the water. Keep beating the mixture smoothly over a low heat. Cook gently until the sauce has become creamy and add salt, pepper and the remaining butter.

Information compiled from the web, supplemented by our experiences.

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