



## All About: Cilantro

Whether you love it or hate it, the heat and humidity are rolling in. We're on the fast track to summer! We're taking the opportunity this week to focus on a summery herb that also draws mixed reviews: **cilantro**. This fresh green herb pairs well with summery foods and some people just can't get enough of its pungent, unique taste. However, to some folks the pungency simply tastes like soap.

There's a good reason for the soapy smell. Cilantro's scent comes primarily from several aldehydes, which each add to the overall aroma. Similar aldehydes are released when soaps and cosmetics interact with air. So cilantro does, definitively, smell like soap. So what makes some people appreciate cilantro, in all its fresh, soapy-smelling glory, and other people hate it?

Evidently a particular gene variant, which affects the sense of smell, makes some people especially sensitive to this soapy smell. People with this genetic variant are slightly more likely to dislike cilantro. However, probably the most basic reason for a cilantro aversion is lack of exposure. Our bodies are hard wired to reject smells and tastes that are suspicious or foreign – for obvious survival reasons! However, with repeated positive experiences, your “gut reaction” can shift.

If you'd like to be converted to a cilantro lover, try smashing the leaves, which allows some of the soapy-smelling aldehydes to be released. [Cilantro pesto](#) would be a great place to start!

### Cilantro in the Garden

Even though cilantro seems like a warm-season crop, it actually prefers cool weather. If you've ever tried to grow cilantro in the garden or a pot, you've probably noticed that it bolts – or “goes to seed” very quickly! The warmer the weather, the faster cilantro gets flowers and seeds.

It's most economical to grow cilantro from seed. Here are some slow-bolting varieties: [Calypso](#), [Caribe](#), and [Santo](#). Plan to reseed every few weeks. In warm weather, there's nothing to do to keep cilantro from sending up flowers and getting seeds fairly quickly. Once the flowers form, the flavor suffers. So, ensure a constant supply of fresh, tasty leaves by throwing some seeds in the ground (or a pot) on a regular basis. Simply plant a section of the area you've set aside for cilantro. Plant another section the next time. If you run out of space, pull the oldest cilantro and reseed. If you have a place that you can devote to long-term cilantro production, just let it flower and drop its seeds and it will come back every year.

To save your own seed, wait for the plants to flower and develop round green seeds. Wait for these seeds to turn brown on the plants. Then remove them during a dry stretch of weather and store in a cool, dry place. We recommend storing seeds in a plastic bag in the refrigerator or freezer. Be sure that the seeds are completely dry before storing. Or, use the seeds in cooking! The common name for cilantro seeds is coriander!



Calypso Cilantro, from Johnny's Seeds