



Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center Master Gardener Community Garden

Cilantro Lesson

Time

10 minutes

Overview

Cilantro is a popular herb used in many cuisines throughout the world. This lesson explores the cilantro plant.

Objectives

Students will:

- Discover the history of cilantro.
- Identify the cilantro plant and different names it is called.
- Learn about the uses for cilantro in different cuisines.

Supplies

- Fresh cilantro
- Flat leaf parsley for comparison
- Coriander seeds/powder

Snack

- Fresh salsa
- Tortilla chips
- Juice/water

Activity

Salsa making

Sources

<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriander>

Cilantro

DO: Begin by introducing yourself and the other Master Gardeners by first names.

SAY: Good afternoon. We are a group of Master Gardeners of Champaign County here to provide a gardening program today at JDC. In the fall and winter months we come every other week to give a lesson on plants, eating right, and taking care of the planet. In the spring and summer we work together with you to plant and maintain a vegetable and flower garden in the outside rec area. (depending on time... I became interested in gardening because... Does anyone else have gardening experience or a relative who gardens?)

Today's lesson will be... I am... with other volunteers...(introduce themselves).
(Participants may introduce themselves also.)

Today we are going to talk about a popular herb, cilantro.

Cilantro is an herb, which is a member of the carrot family and is botanically-known as *Coriandrum sativum*.

Coriander grows wild in South East Europe and had been cultivated in Egypt, India and China for thousands of years. Coriander is believed to be named after "korus", the Greek word for "bedbug" as it was said they both emitted a similar odor.

The Chinese used the herb in love potions believing it provided immortality. Coriander is one of the herbs thought to have aphrodisiac qualities. Cilantro was also known to be used as an appetite stimulant.

Cilantro is known by several different names. The plant and leaves are called cilantro in the Americas, while the seeds (used as a spice) are called coriander (see below). To confuse matters further, the leaves are often referred to as *Mexican parsley*, *Chinese parsley*, and *coriander*.

The leaves (which do resemble flat-leaf parsley), stems, and even the root of the cilantro plant are edible. The most common description of the taste by those who do not care for cilantro is, "It tastes like soap."

Those who enjoy this herb agree that the flavor is definitely strong and pungent, but incomparable to any other herb except its cousin, *culantro*, which does have a similar aroma but is much more pungent in flavor.

Cilantro is sold fresh by the bunch in the produce section of most markets. Dried cilantro is available in some markets, but it is pretty much worthless since the flavor and aroma are lost in the drying process.

It has since become very popular in the Southwest and Western part of the United States as well as in most metropolitan areas. The fresh leaves are used extensively in many South Asian foods, and as garnish on many dishes.

The fresh leaves are an essential ingredient in Mexican salsas and guacamole. An interesting note is that people of European descent frequently are turned off by the smell of cilantro. It has not gained in popularity in Europe as it has in many other parts of the world.