

MeadowSweet

Herbs & Flowers

MeadowSweet Herbs & Flowers Monthly Newsletter

Sept 2017

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Event Dates

- ⇒ **3 Sept**, Orewa Farmers' Market—free rocket seeds with every purchase.
- ⇒ **6 Sept**, Speaking at Beach Haven Garden Circle.
- ⇒ **9 Sept**, Hibiscus Coast RSA Open Day Market.
- ⇒ **10 Sept**, Orewa Farmer's Market—special bee plants.
- ⇒ **11 Sept**, North Shore Herb Group making Smudge Sticks, Herb of the Month: White Sage
- ⇒ **17 Sept**, Orewa Farmers Market—Heirloom Tomatoes!
- ⇒ **24 Sept**, Orewa Farmers Market—free cress funny faces kits for the kids with every purchase.



Garden: Spring

Happy Spring! Undoubtedly the most exciting season—full of promise and potential, excitement, garden plans and ... lots of planting!

Sow & Grow: while early spring is still full of unpredictable weather, and cooler temperatures reign, take care what you start off, but in milder climates much can be put in for your summer harvest, and it is prime time to get started on many seeds, cuttings, and plantings.



See my gardening calendar attached, and follow "[Week in Retrospect](#)" on the blog for more planting ideas.

Watering: seedlings germinate best when they are in a soil that is kept evenly moist, but don't overwater—when they are too wet and it is still too cold, problems like damping off may appear. Spring rains, depending on your area, may provide most of what you need water wise in your garden, but remember to check pots as they dry out quicker on warm, sunny spring days.

Pest control: with all the new green shoots, come all those pesky snails... try a few different control methods to maximize effect—beer traps, rough sand or crushed egg shells around vulnerable plants, and picking them off on snail-hunts. Getting the population under control in early spring will see rewards later.

Harvest: crops that have been steadily growing over winter should be ready now—I've seen some lovely cauliflowers and broccoli, and there's also kale, Florence fennel, peas, leek, radish, silverbeet and New Zealand spinach to pick. My miner's lettuce is producing abundantly, and I've got coriander, parsley, chives, salad burnet and lettuce to harvest almost daily too.

Plant of the Month

Florence Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare azoricum*)



Uses

Culinary

The leaves, roots, seed and stem of this herb is edible, making it a great multi-purpose addition to the garden.

The leaves are delicious with a distinct aniseed or liquorice flavour, and can be eaten raw or cooked. Add sparingly into mixed salads, or pair with fish dishes.

Stalks, stems and the swollen stem base (Fennel bulb) are used raw or cooked, and has become a gourmet vegetable.

Fennel seeds are used as a cooking spice with a strong aniseed flavour,



and also in baked goods such as cakes and cookies. Fennel seed tea is popular and you can even sprout the seeds for salads.

I have personally never used it, but apparently the root has a somewhat parsnip flavour when cooked.

Medicinal

An age-old treatment for digestive complaints, such as griping, fennel is still a commonly used household herb. Although all parts of the plant have similar actions, it is the seeds that are most commonly used as a medicine.

A tea of fennel may help with flatulence, stomachache, cramps, loosen phlegm and to promote lactation.

It is anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic, carminative, expectorant and stomachic.

Household and beauty

In the household, dried fennel is an insect repellent, and the crushed leaves may be effective against fleas. Add to facial steams, and eye-washes. It can also be used as a dye plant - giving yellow and brown dyes.

Garden

It is a good honey plant, and also attracts hoverflies which keep aphid populations down.

Ritual

One of the nine herbs held sacred by the Anglo-Saxons for its power to ward of evil, householders used to hang Fennel above their doors.

"He who sees fennel and gathers it not, is not a man but a devil." - Iago ab Dewi

Cultivate

Florence Fennel is best grown as an annual in a full sun position with well-drained soil. Not as tall as garden fennel or bronze fennel, it only reaches around 1m at maturity. Sow seeds in Spring.

Recipe Share

Gardener's Hand Cream

- 115g Shea butter (or other cosmetic plant based butter)
- 2½ Tablespoons herb infused oil (try calendula and chamomile)
- 1½ teaspoons corn starch or arrowroot powder
- 5 to 10 drops essential oil (optional)

Whip the shea butter until light and fluffy.

Add the infused oil, and then the corn starch, beating until each is fully incorporated into the butter. If you are using essential oils, add them at this time, and beat the mix a final time.

Spoon into glass jars for storage and use as needed when your hands need pampering after a good day in the garden. Lasts about 6 months.

