

FENUGREEK LEAVES



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Fenugreek Leaves: An Introduction

Fenugreek plant is a seasonal annual crop mainly grown for its leaves and seeds. It belongs to the family Fabaceae. Young, tender leaves and young pods of the plant is used as a leafy vegetable while fenugreek seeds are used as a condiment.

Fenugreek leaves are a highly nutritious leafy vegetable. Fenugreek sprouts are used as microgreens and as a nutritious food. Fenugreek leaves and seeds have excellent medicinal properties .

Medicinal Properties of Fenugreeks

1. Fenugreek leaves enhance fat metabolism in our body and reduce fat deposits
2. Fenugreek leaves are rich in water-soluble fibers which help in preventing heart diseases and other life style diseases such as diabetes and stroke
3. Fenugreek leaves help in digestion and avoid constipation
4. Fenugreek seeds are good for hair growth
5. Fenugreek induces labour and increases breast milk production
6. Fenugreek relieves inflammation of body

Origin

Fenugreek is considered to be a native of eastern Europe and Ethiopia. It is widely cultivated in India and Mediterranean countries.

Taxonomy

Fenugreek belongs to the family Fabaceae and genus *Trigonella* and species *foenum-graecum*.



Varieties

Two main types of fenugreeks are in cultivation in India. One is *Trigonella foenum-graceum* and the other one is *Trigonella corniculata*.

Trigonella foenum-graceum is known as 'Common Fenugreek' and mainly grown for fresh edible leaves and dried seeds which are used as condiments. *Trigonella corniculata* is known as 'Cultivated Fenugreek' and mainly grown for its dried leaves which are powdered and used as a garnishing powder called *kasoori methi*.

Both the varieties of fenugreek differ widely in their growth habits. 'Common Fenugreek' is quick growing and produces upright shoots. 'Cultivated Fenugreek' is slow growing initially, and remains in a rosette condition during most of its vegetative growth period. 'Common Fenugreek' produces 2-3 white flowers at the base of each leaf and has 6 to 7 cm straight long pods. 'Cultivated Fenugreek' produces bright orange-yellow flowers on long stalks. It has smaller sickle-shaped pods.

Growing Fenugreek

Climate and Soil: Fenugreek is a cool season crop and best suited for temperate climate. Fenugreek crop is frost-resistant. 'Cultivated Fenugreek' needs a very cool climate for its vigorous growth. Fenugreek prefers well-drained, moist, fertile, rich loamy soils with neutral to slightly acidic pH.

Propagation and Planting: Fenugreek plant is propagated through seeds. Soaking the seeds overnight increases germination rate. Seeds are sown in well-prepared beds by braodcasting . After the sowing process, beds are covered with a light bio-mulch of dried leaves or a thin layer of soil. In India, seeds are sown in September to October.

Sowing Process: Sowing in rows of 20 to 25 cm facilities weeding and intercultural operations in the initial stages. 'Common Fenugreek' may take 5 to 6 days to germinate while 'Cultivated Fenugreek' may take 7 to 8 days.

Seed Rate: In case of 'Common Fenugreek', approx. 25 kg of seeds are required to sow one hectare of land. In case of 'Cultivated Fenugreek', 20 kg seeds are required for one hectare.

Watering: Soon after sowing, a light watering is given. Seeds need to be kept moist throughout the germination process.

Fenugreek is a moisture-loving plant and frequent watering induces quick growth of the plants. Soil moisture is necessary to keep the plants succulent and healthy.

Pest and Disease Management: Fenugreek plants do not suffer from any major disease-pest attack. If minor pest attack is noticed such as aphids or thrips, organic pesticides such as pyrethrums may be used.

However, weeds may be a problem during the initial stages of plant growth. Once mulching is practiced, weed growth is suppressed naturally.

Harvesting and Yield

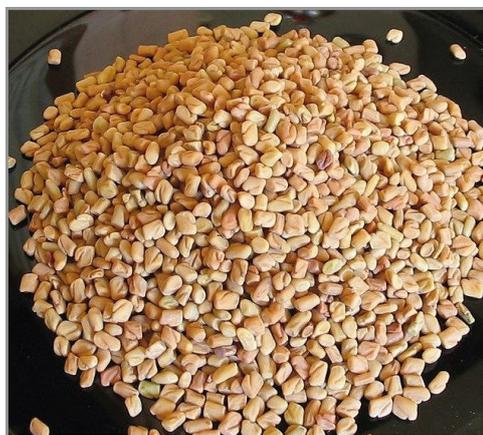
Fenugreek leaves are ready for harvesting within three to four weeks of sowing seeds. For harvesting seeds, allow the plants to grow for more time until pods are developed and seeds become ripe for harvest.

‘Cultivated Fenugreek’ gives several harvests of leaves. First leaf harvesting may be done in 25 to 30 days after sowing seeds. In case of “Common Fenugreek”, the young shoots are nipped off in about three weeks after sowing. Later on, the whole plant is often pulled out, bunched and marketed. Sometimes after taking 2 to 3 cuttings, the plants are left to produce seed.

Yield: ‘Common Fenugreek’ yield is about 7 to 8 tons of fresh leaves per hectare. ‘Cultivated Fenugreek’ gives a higher yield of about 10 tons of fresh leaves per hectare.



Fenugreek Plant



Fenugreek Seeds

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