Dill
*Anethum graveolens*

Dill or *Anethum graveolens* is a wonderfully scented annual herb that is used as dill weed and dill seed to enhance many recipes. The weed is gathered from the feather-like leaves of the plant, while the seeds come from the yellow flower “heads” after they have matured.

The word Dill comes from the Saxon word "Dilla" meaning soothe. It has long been taken as an aid to digestion and as a tranquilizer. It is an erect, fennel like plant that grows to a height of 4 feet.

Dill grows well in Florida. It is produced commercially to a small extent and is grown in many home gardens. "Dill" does not transplant well. It is best to plant your own seed. Sow seed at 12" spacing 1/4 inch deep. Although it can be planted in the spring, November through December is the best planting time. Dill grows best in full sun, and will only need watered once a week if there is no rain. Dill will re-seed itself yearly if the plant is allowed to go to seed. (It takes 65 days.)

To gather the dill weed, trim the leaves as soon as the plant has been established. While you can dry dill weed, it is actually better to just stick it in the freezer. Chop up what you need, and then return the rest to the freezer. When the flowerheads turn brown the seeds are ripe. Cut the whole plant down and dry the seedheads indoors. Shake the seeds from the seed heads and store in airtight containers.

Dill is also one of many host plants providing food for caterpillars and luring female butterflies into the garden to lay eggs. Since most butterfly larvae can only digest a specific type of plant foliage, the female butterfly only lays her eggs on particular kind of plants. This plant is known as the host plant.

The Black Swallowtail, a.k.a., Parsnip Swallowtail, Eastern Black Swallowtail, and Parsley Worm, will lay her eggs on virtually any member of the carrot family (Apiaceae), wild or cultivated, which includes favorites such as Parsley, Dill and Fennel (Foeniculum spp.). This species spends the winter in the pupal stage, but may be seen flying as early as the end of April and as late as the end of October.