

Dill, Fennel, and Parsley

Culinary Herbs & Butterfly Plants

Many edible gardens include herbs like dill, fennel, and parsley. But just because they are considered herbs, doesn't mean they can't be used as ornamentals in your butterfly garden. That's because these plants are also enjoyed by the Black Swallowtail Butterfly whose brightly colored caterpillars feed only on plants in the carrot family (which also includes cilantro and carrots) in order to complete their lifecycle. The flowers of dill and fennel also attract many beneficial insects and pollinators to the garden.

	<u>Dill</u>	<u>Fennel</u>	<u>Parsley</u>
<u>Growth Cycle:</u>	Annual	Perennial	Biennial
<u>Mature Size:</u>	up to 4' tall	up to 3' tall	up to 12" tall
<u>Plant Habit:</u>	Upright	Upright	Upright/Sprawling
<u>Foliage Color:</u>	Green	Green or Bronze	Green
<u>Flower Color:</u>	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow or White
<u>Exposure:</u>	Full Sun	Full Sun	Full Sun/Partial Shade
<u>Soil Tolerances:</u>	All are moderately drought tolerant; prefer moist, slightly acidic soils		
<u>Planting Dates:</u>	Nov-Dec or Spring	Fall or Early Winter	Late Fall or Winter
<u>Plant Spacing:</u>	12 inches	12 inches	6 inches
<u>Parts Used:</u>	seedheads (as needed)	seeds (when ripe) leaves (as needed)	leaves (as needed)

General Care & Growing Tips:

All three plants are best grown in cool temperatures (spring and fall for zone 8) for edible purposes. Bolting (flowering) tends to occur during warm weather, but attracts many beneficial insects to the garden. If you discover swallowtail caterpillars eating your plants, consider it a treat – not trouble. If you're worried there won't be any left for you, plant enough for the caterpillars to enjoy them also. Remember, they need these plants to complete their lifecycle. In North Florida, you may find caterpillars from early summer to fall, and while they made devour the plants, they usually won't kill it.

Since herbs are generally harvested in small portions and are also small in size, growing them in containers works well. Their attractiveness as an ornamental plant also makes them fit well into the home landscape, either in a border planting, or included in the flower garden.

Resource:

Stephens, James M. (1998). *Herbs in the Florida Garden*. University of Florida.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/vh020>

Photo credits: Alicia Lamborn



A flowering parsley plant attracts the adult Black Swallowtail butterfly (above) whose larvae eat the leaves and stems to complete the lifecycle (below).

