

# Caraway



## QUICK FACTS

Caraway is a biennial of the family *Apiaceae* (formerly called the *Umbelliferae* for the typical umbrella shaped flower head), and is related to dill, cumin, fennel, and anise which also produce aromatic fruits, commonly called seeds. It is native to Europe and Asia Minor and is somewhat naturalized in the United States. The Greek author Pliny thought it was named for the province of Caria (in present day Turkey); the common name seems to derive from the Arabic name for the seed, *karawya*. Caraway has been used for the last 5000 years.

### Description

Bluish green leaves, much divided into threadlike segments, grow from a somewhat fleshy taproot. First year plants are very hardy and keep their leaves most of the winter. It usually flowers in May of its second year with white to pink flowers, and when the seeds ripen the tops and roots die.

### Culture

Caraway likes a sunny, dry location. The sunnier the location in spring, the stronger the fragrant oil of the seed will be. Seed can be sown in the fall, or sown in spring where plants are wanted, or if sown in seedling flats, potted when their first four true leaves appear to minimize transplant shock. They will tolerate partial shade in summer. Ripe seed should be scalded with boiling water to destroy any hidden insects, then thoroughly dried in sunlight for two to three days.



*Carum carvi* commons.wikimedia.org

### Uses

Caraway seed is popular in north European cooking to flavor breads, cakes, sauerkraut, stews, cabbage, cheeses, and cooked fruits. Seeds covered with sugar are used for comfits or to decorate

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cookies and cakes. Mrs. Grieve writes that it is a Scottish custom to dip the buttered side of bread into a dish of caraway seeds, and that this is called "salt water jelly." Kummel is a caraway-flavored liqueur. Oil extracted from the seeds is used for colic and digestive disturbances, and in laxatives to reduce griping. The oil is used commercially for flavoring and in perfumery.

### Sources

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