

PEPPERMINT & SPEARMINT

A butterfly hanging upside down giving a "mint is cool" look.



Mint

Peppermint (*mentha piperita*)

Spearmint (*Mentha Spicata*)

Interesting Facts

Some cultures wrap spearmint in long strips of bacon to add flavor to the meat. Honeybees love Peppermint and Spearmint flowers because they are heavy nectar producers. A mild, pleasant honey can be produced if the bees have enough mint to forage.

Herb photos by Rebekah Anast

Story

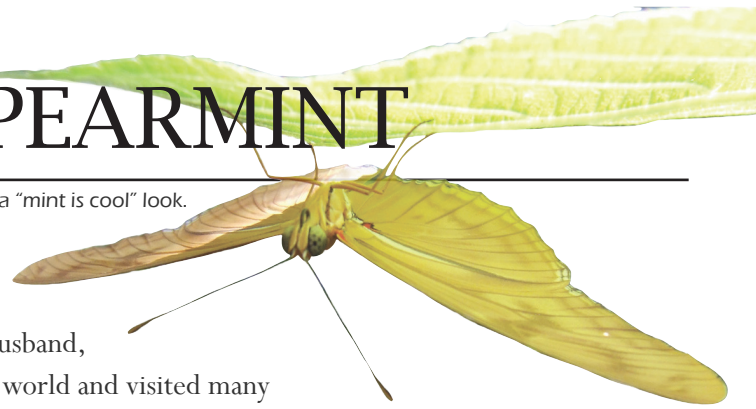
Before I married my husband, Gabriel, I traveled the world and visited many interesting places. For one year I lived in the country of Israel. The desert of Israel has bloomed in the last 60 years since the Jewish people reclaimed the desert in 1948, and made it their official country and home. There are miles of greenhouses growing everything from peppers to roses. Citrus orchards and Date palms line the roads from north to south. Olive orchards rustle in the breezes on the sides of Mount Carmel where the prophet Elijah called down fire from Heaven as evidence that his God was the only God. In the Mediterranean city of Haifa, where extensive gardening is not a possibility, most families have a little potted herb garden on their porch, which is used for culinary purposes. Growing in these pots you will usually find a healthy green cluster of mint. Mint is used to season salads, spreads, and lamb, but most commonly, it is used in a cool drink during the summertime. There is nothing as refreshing as a lightly sweetened lemonade with crushed mint leaves poured over ice!

Uses

Mint has a high menthol content, which makes the herb a good choice for clearing plugged nasal passages, and soothing inflamed lung, throat, and nasal tissue. Peppermint and Spearmint are popular flavors in chewing gum, toothpaste, chocolates, breath sprays, and more. Peppermint can also be found in some shampoos, and when used, it will give a tingly, cooling sensation on the scalp.

Mint aids in calming an upset stomach by inhibiting the growth of certain bacteria and can help smooth and relax muscles when inhaled or applied to the skin. Other health benefits are attributed to the high manganese, vitamin C and vitamin A content; as well as trace amounts of various other nutrients such as fiber, iron, calcium, folate, potassium, tryptophan, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids, riboflavin, and copper! Who would ever guess this little green plant could hold so much value!

Need an herb to make you burp? Mint tea relaxes the gastro-oesophageal sphincter, thus promoting belching, and reducing acid reflux, and indigestion.





Spearmint grows well in wet soil

Tummy Tea:

Bring 2 cups of water to a boil and sprinkle in:

• Heaping tablespoon of dried mint (any kind of mint will do.)

• Heaping tablespoon of chamomile

Boil 1 minute, turn off heat, cover and let steep for 3 minutes. Strain and serve with honey for sweetener.



How to Grow it:

Peppermint generally thrives in the shade or sun and expands quickly by underground root beds. If you choose to grow Peppermint, it is advisable to plant it in a container, otherwise it can rapidly take over a whole garden. However, you can also plant it in a low wet place that might otherwise be useless. All types of mint thrive in continually damp soil.

To harvest for culinary or medicinal purposes, simply cut the branches when in full growth, leaving a minimum of a third of the branch, which will encourage the plant to re-grow. It should be noted that the leaves will lose their aromatic appeal after the plants flower. Dry the cut stalks with leaves, crush and store in glass jars for later use.

Tip: I spread out my fresh mint on a bed-sheet outside on the trampoline, and leave it for a day in the full sun, until the herb is completely dry. Then, I bring in the corners of the sheet, making a bundle, tie it off, and let my kids jump on it until the mint inside is crushed and crumbled small enough to transfer to glass jars.

Mint Lemonade:

Add the juice of 5 lemons to 1 gallon of water. Stir in sugar or honey to suit your desired level of sweetness. Rub a fist full of mint leaves between your palms, and then drop into the lemonade. Stir and allow to sit for 2 hours minimum for best taste. Strain off the leaves and serve with ice, and sprigs of fresh mint for garnish.

Mint Massage Oil:

Combine

1/2 cup olive oil

Several drops of Peppermint (desired strength)

Keep in sealed/corked glass container.

(This is useful to rub gently on a colicky baby's tummy to help relax the muscles.)



Spearmint in blossom



Rain on a Spearmint leaf

Mint Quiz:

Peppermint is native to _____. Mint grows best in _____ soil.

Name the various types of mint listed in the lesson above: _____

Peppermint contains Omega _____ fatty acids.

Name a few other properties found in Mint: Vitamin C, Vitamin A, _____

Why is mint a good herb for clearing plugged nasal passages? _____

How will you use mint? _____
