

Spearmint Fact Sheet

Mint is good for you!
It is rich in **Vitamins A and C, manganese, anti-oxidants, and fiber.** In addition, it aids digestion, eases congested lungs, and acts as an anti-microbial.

Scientific Name: *Menthe spicata*

Plant Family: Mint (*Mentha*)

Relatives: Closely related to peppermint, yerba buena, and lemon balm. More distant cousin of sages, thyme, rosemary, catnip, and oregano and even more distant cousin of borage and verbena.

Cultivation: As long as you water regularly, mints will thrive. They do best in rich (lots of organic matter) soil in partial shade, but they can tolerate a whole range of conditions as long as they get water. In fact, you'll need to pay more attention to containing your mint rather than nurturing it. Mints spread by rhizomes (underground stem structures) just like Bermuda grass. It's best to grow them in their own contain.

I encourage you to grow spearmint because you can use it all winter long, unlike peppermint which typically dies back in the winter time.

Propagation: Mint is almost always planted from rooted cuttings or divisions. (You can root cuttings by keeping them in a jar of water until you see small white roots emerge. Change the water every few days and strip off all leaves that sit below the water).

Planting: Unlike most plants, mint should be planted deeper than it sat in the nursery container---any part of the stem buried in moist soil will root. You can even lay mints horizontally with only the top leaves emerging from the soil. The plant will send up new stems from every node along the buried stem. This is the fastest way to get a relatively large harvest from one small container of mint.

Cultivation: Keep plants well watered. Cut-back hard when harvesting. Every couple of years, you will need to amend soil with organic compost and dig out about ½ of the rhizomes to rejuvenate the plant.

Harvesting and Using: Don't be afraid to cut mint back hard when harvesting---cut stems all the way to the soil. Remember, as long as it gets water, mint is a very tough plant and harvesting regularly will actually encourage new growth---the more you harvest, the more you get. Use leaves (and stems) in spa water and hot tea. Minced mint leaves are a delicious addition to many dishes such as tabouli. After work hours, fresh mint leaves enliven drinks like mojito's ☺.

Other Interesting Facts:

~ Mint or Mintha, is named after the Greek nymph Minthes, who was turned into a mint plant by Proserpine, the jealous wife of Pluto, for casting covetous eyes on the philandering god of the underworld. Proserpine gained her revenge by turning Minthes into an herb where she would be forever trampled under people's feet. To keep people treading on her forever, Proserpine gave Minthes eternal freshness and fragrance.

~Mint flowers attract many kinds of beneficial insects and pollinators such as hover flies, honeybees, lacewings, and butterflies. In addition, there is anecdotal evidence that the aromatic oils in mint repel aphids, flea beetles, and cabbage moth, so mint makes a great habitat and companion plant.

Very easy plant for busy school gardeners,
as long as you water!

Mint and More Outline

1. Mint

- a. Top 3 crops for school gardeners: perennial purple tree collards, arugula, spearmint
- b. Mint as part of a classroom practice---grow, mint tea, spa water
- c. If we can get kids in the habit, offset 1 soda a week it could impact students positively; also opportunity to send positive message
- d. Spearmint vs. Peppermint
- e. Mint family-->square stems and opposite leaves
- f. Growing it---container and water
- g. Planting it---plant it deep---horizontally
- h. Tending it---water---divide/thin every once in a while
- i. Using it---wash hands and scissors before harvesting AND rinse in potable water---put in tea or spa water

2. More

- a. Jigsaw
- b. Rate smell and record other fact
- c. These are all good options
- d. Everyone try Stevia
- e. Sampling---

3. Outside

- a. Park's Secret Soil Ammendment---coconut coir, lava rock, organic compost
- b. Tricks for filling wine barrels
- c. Watering station
- d. Transplanting---mint family can go deeper, other families plant at soil line---water in well to prevent transplant shock
- e. Experiment with burlap sack

More Easy Herbs to Help You Rethink Your Drink!

Plant (<i>Latin name</i>)	Plant Family	Cultivation Notes	Use	Rating	Other
Meyer lemon (Citrus)	Citrus	Does fine in pots. Fruit ripens in late winter. Very easy! Water well.	Spa waters, salad dressing, lemonade, lemon curd.		Meyer lemon is thought to be a cross between lemon and orange.
Anise hyssop (<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>)	Mint <i>Lamiaceae</i>	Gets tall (3') so plant on north side.	Mix with hot or cold mint teas.		Cultivars vary in flavoring. Some kinds are bitter.
Lemon Balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)	Mint <i>Lamiaceae</i>	Even more invasive than other mints.	Mix with mint tea---hot or cold.		Genus is named for bees in Latin (<i>melissa</i>).
Lemon Grass (<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>)	Grass (<i>Poaceae</i>)	Dies back in the winter time. Likes good drainage so plant in a mound.	Leaves are good in tea and in curries.		Some varieties are cultivated to make citronella oil used as a mosquito repellent.
Rose Geranium (<i>Pelargonium graveolens</i>)	Geranium Family (<i>Geraniaceae</i>)	Easy to grow, but gets big (3'x3') so put it in the ground. Perennial, evergreen.	You can candy the flowers. They make a beautiful garnish on salads. You can add some varieties to tea.		Not a real geranium.
Stevia (<i>Stevia rebaudiana</i>)	Sunflower (<i>Asteraceae</i>)	Perennial that dies back in the winter. Pinch tips to encourage bushiness.	Sweetener---in tea or foods.		30 times sweeter than sugar. Is 40% of all sweeteners in Japan.
Lemon Verbena (<i>Aloysia triphylla</i>)	Verbena Family (<i>Verbenaceae</i>)	Perennial that dies back in the winter. Can get big, so prune back hard.	Delicious in tea. I prefer it to lemongrass or lemon balm.		Originally from Chile which also has a Mediterranean climate so it thrives here.
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutia</i>)	Sunflower (<i>Asteraceae</i>)	German chamomile is an annual that dies back in the winter; self-sows. There is also a perennial variety.	Delicious in tea. Tea is said to have a calming effect.		Wild chamomiles grow on fire roads and other disturbed areas all over Northern California.