

Description

Basil Holy/Sacred Ocimum Sanctum Family: Lamiacea

Also called *Ocimum Tenuiflorum* or Tulsi, Holy/ Sacred Basil is a small bushy plant that grows up to 60cm tall. It has small, ovate leaves up to 5cm long with a strong clove-like scent, slightly toothed and hairy, arranged along a woody hairy stem. Purple flowers grow along the end of the stem in close whorls and at 1-2cm intervals. In India there are two varieties of Holy Basil: Lakshmi Tulsi, the purple-leaved, and Krishna Tulsi, the green-leaved.

Growing Tips

Holy Basil is an annual plant best grown in rich, well drained soil in a sunny spot, sheltered from wind, between October and March. It makes an ideal windowsill plant, but must be well watered. The original, annual variety will die down as soon as the temperature drops below five degrees. In warmer climates it survives the winter and resumes growth in the new spring.

Parts Used

Leaves

Uses

In Thailand it is called Kraphao [pron. Crupawo] and made into a well-known dish called Phat Kraphao which is pork, beef or chicken stir-fried with Holy Basil. Ayurveda has long used its healing quality to correct imbalances and assist the body when exposed to stress, snake bites and to dispel fevers. Today, it is used in the Western cultures as a strong stress resistance, and its uses are diverse; from cardiovascular health to recovery from radiation therapy, anti-ageing, and improving stamina and immunity. The dried leaves are made into a tea, and extracts are available commercially, as well as essential oils. It is now being researched for its analgesic effect and in connection with type II Diabetes.

Origin & History

Holy Basil is found growing wild throughout the lowlands of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is a sacred plant in India and referred to as "elixir of life", "the incomparable one", or "Queen of Herbs". It is grown by Hindus in homes and temples.

In India the herb is known as Tulsi and is said to be the plant grown from the spirit of a woman called Vrinda who was married to the king of Jalandhar, servant of Shiva, the God of Destruction.

Tulsi leaves are used while worshipping and aids meditation and helps to transform the soul. Strings of prayer beads made of the stems of Tulsi are used in prayers to bring clarity and protection. In a sacred Hindu text everything about the plant is said to be sacred, including the soil it grows in and the water that feeds it.

