

Living Herbs

Description

Tarragon, French
Artemisia Dracunculus
Family: Asteraceae

This perennial aromatic herb grows stems up to 60cm tall with thin lanceolate dark-green leaves with a grey shimmer, 3mm wide and up to 5cm long, at regular intervals and at different angles along the stem. This is a favourite in French cooking.

Growing Tips

French Tarragon likes well-drained, alkaline soil in a good sunny position. In cooler climates it may produce a pale-green small bell-like flower arranged along the flowering stem, but will not mature into seeds, and is best planted as a small plant. The stem dies back to a root stock over winter and does need some protection from frost; remember to cover well with mulch.

Parts Used

Leaves - stems and flowers can be used for decorative purposes.

Uses

The leaves have a delicate peppery aniseed flavor used in Mediterranean and French cooking. No roast chicken is complete without Tarragon and is also a main ingredient in Bearnaise sauce. The flavor is lost when the leaf dries therefore it is best used fresh and conserved in vinegars, oils and butters for later use.

{Do not confuse with the Russian Tarragon (*A. dracunculoides*). This herb can be sown from seeds and is not as frequently used in cooking as it has a coarser more bitter flavor.}

Origin & History

It is a native of Southern Europe. The name 'dracunculus' is a reference to its folklore reputation (meaning 'little dragon') to cure bites from snakes and serpents and other venomous threats.

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