

# Living Herbs

## Description

**Spearmint**  
**Mentha Spicata**  
**Family: Lamiaceae**

Spearmint is a perennial herbaceous rhizomatous plant. It has square-edged fibrous maroon coloured stems up to 50cm tall and produces very fragrant green glabrous spiky leaves 4-9cm long and with strong venation and serrated edges. Small white to pale purple flowers form towards the tip of the stem in spaced whorls.

## Growing Tips

It likes part or full shade and an airy place with fertile moist soil but dies down in winter. For best results plant 30cm apart and place in a pot to prevent spreading.

## Parts Used

Leaves and flowers.

## Uses

Spearmint's fresh leaf is used in mint sauce, vinegars, added to fruit jellies, ice creams and drinks, the best known today being the Mexican cocktail Mojito. Mint contains the nutrients vitamin C, pro-vitamin A, phosphorus, iron, potassium and calcium.

The medicinal use of mint is due to its volatile oil menthol and derivatives, and is used for freshening flavour in toothpaste, chewing gum and hair care. As a tea it aids digestion, freshens the breath and helps cope with summer heat and hot flushes, as it is cooling. This mint is mainly used for its essential which is rich in carvone, and helps reduce flatulence and colic.

Spearmint is also used to reduce symptoms of hirsutism, a disorder in which women develop male features such as facial hair. For essential oil production it is used fresh, but can be dried to make tea and in cosmetics.

## Origin & History

Mint is indigenous to Europe and has been naturalized throughout the world with many different varieties. In Greek mythology it was called the herb of hospitality.

Leaves were strewn over loam floors to dispel the earthy smell in rooms and replace it with the fresh mint flavour.

Its medicinal qualities are recorded since prehistoric archaeological times.

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