

# Spearmint



**Common Names:** Spearmint, mint

**Scientific Name:** *Mentha spicata*

**Climate:** Warm and temperate

**Plant description:** It is a soft, non-woody plant that grows up to 30 cm high. The mint leaves are very aromatic, elongated, oval in shape, with serrated margin and hairless rough underside. Their color varies from clear to medium green. The stem is rounded, branched and has the same color as the leaves. It has spikes of blue or white flowers.

**Cultivation:** Spearmint grows and spreads very fast as it has long invasive roots. It can be planted in a pot or directly in the soil.

Spearmint can grow in partial and full sunlight, and can even in partial shade. However, it grows the best if you provide it with six hours of sun daily. In the tropical regions or during very hot seasons it should have only 4 hours of sun as the heat burns the leaves. Thus the best temperature for spearmint is around 21°C. It is moderately cold-tolerant herb, but it can be damaged under extremely cold temperatures. It also grows in hot temperatures but it can become dehydrated, which can kill the plant.

It prefers to grow in well-drained, moist, nutrient-rich soil Sow during the spring directly in pots or in the ground. If sowing in soil, it should be placed at a distance of 20 cm between plants. Clay soil is perfect for the plant. However, when it is grown in pots, it prefers moderately well-drained soil - the soil that drains water well but not excessively. When planting the spearmint provides it with soil mixed with natural fertilizer.

Irrigation is very important for this crop, since it has a very high need for water, but always avoiding waterlogging.

It is important to prune the plant but not before it reaches the height of 10 cm. Only cut no more

than half of the stem. Prune before it produces the flowering buds.

You can start harvesting leaves and stems three months after planting.

To propagate the spearmint just cut stems about 7-8 cm long, below a part where a leaf grows on the plant. Remove all but the top leaves. Put it in a glass of water. The roots will appear in a couple of weeks. Put the plant in a new pot containing nutrient-rich soil. Trim the top growth from the stems. Water it. and then transplant them to their



growing locations.

**Uses:** One of the main benefits of growing mint in gardens is that it helps prevent pests such as aphids, whiteflies and other harmful insects attacking vegetables and other plants.

It can be used in tea, water, salads and as a condiment for food. It has medicinal use to combat digestive problems such as stomach pain and gastritis. Another benefit of this plant is that it attracts pollinating insects such as butterflies, bees, and bumblebees. These pollinators help in the garden to have better crops.

**Pests and diseases:** Aphids and Spider Mites - to get rid of these Knock the insects off the plants with a blast of water from the hose.

Flea Beetles - Prevent infestations by cleaning up around mint plants at the end of fall.

Caterpillars - Remove them manually or spray the plant with an insecticide composed of water and dish soap or boiled water with tobacco.

Cutworms - Pick off cutworms if you see them, and drop them into a bucket of soapy water to kill them. Keep mint plants weeded and till the garden in fall and spring to expose and kill the eggs before they hatch into cutworms.

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En español: Hierbabuena

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