

Mentha piperita (peppermint),
spicata (spearmint)
Family: *Lamiaceae* - mint
Parts used: leaves and blossoms, aerial parts

There are hundreds of varieties of mint and has a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and smells - although most have the familiar minty aroma. The two main mints commonly used are peppermint and spearmint. Peppermint has stronger properties due to its high menthol content; spearmint is not as strong which makes it a better fit for use with children.

Properties

Analgesic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, antifungal, anti-depressant, antiseptic Antispasmodic, antiviral, astringent, calmative, diaphoretic, digestive, decongestant, nervine, purifying, stimulating.

Energetics: cooling
Systems Affected: digestive, respiratory, nervous

Uses

- Sinus and bronchial congestion
- Coughs and colds
- Sore throat
- Pain reliever
- Toothaches and mouth wash
- Nausea, motion sickness, abdominal pain
- Aids digestion
- Digestive complaints: gas, constipation, diarrhea, cramps, bloating, etc.
- Parasites
- Bug bites and stings
- Repels mosquitoes, flies, fleas, moths, ants, and spiders.
- Infections
- Headache
- Mental strain
- Boosts memory and thinking
- Nervous system
- Women's health including PMS
- Clogged milk ducts and milk knots in nursing mothers (best used as a fresh poultice)
- Burns
- Fever reducer
- Skin conditions, including rashes
- Stimulant

- Cooling (spray bottle with a few drops essential oil or tea, spritz over body for a refreshing coolant on hot days)
- Cleaning agent: deodorizes, disinfects, and removes noxious odors
- Increases oxygen supply

Herb Preparations

- Tea (best way to utilize)
- Bath, foot soak, steam (opens sinuses)
- Herbal oil
- Tincture/extract
- Vinegar (makes a great fly, ant, spider repellent to spray around the house)
- Sleep pillows and sachets
- Powder, capsules, pills
- Syrup, honey
- Salve, ointment, balm
- Poultice (best for bug bites, stings, and milk knots)
- Food: drinks, smoothies, herbal water, salads, pesto, pastas, chop and include in cookies and treats.
- Essential oil

Care/Harvesting

- Must plant from a cutting, when planted from seed the plant loses potency, smell, and taste. The nursery has many varieties to choose from.
- This is a vigorously spreading plant so watch carefully and only plant next to other vigorous plants, in a container or where you don't care to let it spread.
- Mint likes rich, moist, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade.
- Frequent cuttings encourage bushiness. Harvest leaves anytime during the season, in the morning when it is sunny and dry is a good time. Never harvest wet leaves and pick out those that are shriveled or diseased. Leaves cut before flowering yield a sweeter taste.
- Cut the entire plant back within a few inches of the ground when the first flowers appear.
- Not a good bed mate with other plants, including other mints. They easily cross pollinate with other mint varieties, making them less potent. I do plant mine next to yarrow, which is another vigorous plant, and they seem to tolerate each other. St. John's wort is another vigorous plant that would get along with mint. Chamomile on the other hand gets along well with mint and when planted next to each other their oil content is increased. Never plant next to potatoes.
- Planted in pots around the garden mint discourages ant, controls aphids and cabbage caterpillars. Mint will also aid the growth and flavor of cabbages, pea, and tomatoes.