



Herb Newsletter

10/1/2006

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2

Perennials for Fall Planting

If you want to start an herb garden or add to one you already have, the following herbs can be started now. You may even want to mix these herbs in with your ornamental plantings:

Catnip *Nepeta cataria* Favorite of cat lovers, for cats relish the intoxicating leaves. Tea is a popular nightcap, as it induces a good night's sleep. It is used as a remedy for colds and fevers.

Chives *Allium schoenoprasum* Regular onion chives. Besides using the leaves, try the pretty purple flowers, separated into florets, in salads for color and flavor.

Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea* Echinacea is now a household name, and herbal products made from it are found in every corner pharmacy. It is truly the queen of medicinal herbs because it not only helps the body fight off disease by boosting the immune system, it is one of the showiest perennial herbs in the garden.

Russian Sage *Perovskia atriplicifolia* Not exactly sage nor Russian, this native of the Crimea, Afghanistan and Pakistan is so versatile as an ornamental it was honored as the perennial plant of the year for 1995. It has beautiful purple-blue flowers that dry well for dried arrangements. Leaves are pleasantly fragrant with a strong camphor scent, nice in potpourris. It's an excellent bee plant.

Thyme *Thymus vulgaris* Aromatic low growing bush or creeping herbs, ideal for rockeries, borders, or along pathways. Pretty pink or purple blossoms are a favorite of honeybees. It has culinary and medicinal value. It is essential in French cooking. There is almost no stew, soup, or ragout that does not call for a pinch or two. Appropriate seasoning for rich meats and fish, improving their digestibility. It is essential in bouquet garni (thyme, parsley, bay). Grow indoors or out in full sun.

Spearmint *Mentha spicata* Those who know the mints, know they don't require much of a green thumb to grow. There are many varieties with multitudes of uses in the kitchen, in commerce and in medicine. Grow indoors or out, in full or partial sun. (*Mint seeds do not produce plants of the same quality as the cultivated strains, which can only be propagated from cuttings or division.*) Spearmint is the best cooking mint. It is excellent with carrots, peas, and potatoes, and for making mint sauces for roast lamb.

It's time to plant perennials. Call today for the ones mentioned here plus many more.

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As an aromatherapy treatment, spearmint helps temper the effects of asthma, fatigue, fever, gas, headache, nausea, and scabies.

Why the name spearmint? Its leaves resemble the blade of a spear.

The Wrigley company first started selling its famous spearmint gum in 1893. Today, it takes the equivalent of 30,550 football fields of farmland to produce the mint the company requires for Wrigley's Spearmint Gum and other products.

SPEARMINT RECIPES

Of the 25 species of the genus *Mentha*, spearmint is the mint of cooks. Also known as garden mint, green mint, and lamb mint, it's a popular addition to green tea in the Arab world, common in North African cuisine, and a flavoring in the mint jellies and sauce traditionally served with lamb. It works equally well in cooked dishes when added to the cooking water up front or chopped fine and tossed with the finished dish. Slip it into iced tea, lemonade, and lemon-lime soda, or make a simple spearmint tea with a few teaspoons of crushed leaves for each cup of water. Add it to cold drinks with minted ice cubes by freezing a half-filled ice cube tray then placing whole leaves on top, adding the remaining water, and then refreezing.

The leaves and flowers make an elegant garnish, either fresh or crystallized. To crystallize, make a fine paste with pasteurized powdered meringue and water, and use a pastry brush to coat fresh, clean spearmint leaves or flowers. Sprinkle with superfine sugar and let dry. These leaves will keep for more than a week in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator or up to six months in the freezer.

MINT-LEMON ICED TEA

5 tea bags (steep in hot water for several hours)
1 small can frozen lemonade
Handful fresh spearmint leaves (steeped with tea)
½ cup sugar

Put in a gallon jar and fill with water and ice.

HERBAL SALAD DRESSING

½ cup yogurt (plain)
¼ cup olive oil
3 tsp. lemon juice
1 seeded cucumber
1 tsp. fresh dill
½ tsp spearmint
½ tsp lovage
Dash paprika
Garlic or chives
1 tsp. grated onion

Blend yogurt, olive oil, and lemon juice in blender. Process cucumber, dill, onion, spearmint, lovage, and paprika in food processor. Mix, let set in refrigerator for 2-3 hours. Pour over salad.