

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)

MEDICINAL: Basil is used to treat stomach cramps, vomiting, fevers, colds, flu, headaches, whooping cough, and menstrual pains. It is also used to reduce stomach acid, making it a valuable part of any treatment for ulcers, and a valuable addition to any recipe using tomatoes for those with sensitive stomachs. Externally, it can be used for insect bites, to draw out the poisons. It has been used in other countries to eliminate worms from the intestines, and the oil from basil leaves is applied directly to the skin to treat acne.

MAGICALK: Basil protects from evil and negativity, and aids in attracting and keeping love. It is used for purification baths, and in wealth and prosperity rituals. Carrying a basil leaf in your pocket brings wealth, and if powdered basil is sprinkled over your mate while they sleep, it is supposed to eliminate infidelity from your marriage.

GROWING: Basil will grow in any well-drained, fairly rich soil, and full sun. It can be grown throughout most of North America. It is an annual, which reaches 2-3 feet tall. Pinch off the tips to promote bushiness and flower buds to maintain growth.

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*): Mars, Fire. Used in wealth and prosperity rituals. Carrying basil in your pockets is supposed to attract money into them. A wife can supposedly stop her husband being unfaithful by dusting her upper body with powdered basil.

Basil Herb Profile

Also known as

Ocimum basilicum, Sweet Basil, Garden Basil, and Common Basil. Not to be confused with holy basil(*tulsi*)used in Ayurvedic medicine.

Introduction

Fresh basil leaves have a unique aroma not even approximated by any other herb, making them an essential ingredient in cuisines of countries all over the world. There are hundreds of species and their hybrids marketed as basil, but the herb most commonly used in herbal medicine is the Mediterranean or "sweet" basil (although arguably Thai basil is sweeter). Basil produces its essential oils in glands in its leaves that have to be activated by UV-B rays from the sun; the best quality basil is grown in hot, sunny climates. Basil is used as a fragrance ingredient in perfumes, soaps, shampoos, and other body care products. Reportedly it has been used in the Far East for centuries for a variety of ailments, including head colds, a cure for warts, worms, as an appetite stimulant, carminative, and as a diuretic, among others.

Constituents

Basil has a unique aroma because of the many constituents of its essential oil. The oil contains 1,8-

cineol, citral, eugenol, linalool, methyl chavicol, methyl cinnamate in relatively large quantities and bisabolene, camphor, cryophyllene, geraniol, and ocimene in smaller quantities influencing taste and action in the body.

Parts Used

Dried leaf in teas or essential oils for topical application.

Typical Preparations

The essential oil used topically. As a spice it can liberally used in foods.

Summary

While most of us are familiar with basil as a culinary herb, the applications of basil in natural health are not as well known. It was first described in a Chinese herbal around 1060 C.E, and has been used for stomach spasms and kidney ailments there ever since. The Chinese have also used it to treat snakebites and insect bites. The essential oil is antibacterial, and drops of basil oil may relieve ear infections. European scientists are investigating the use of basil oil as treatment for antibiotic resistant infections with Staphylococcus, Enterococcus, and Pseudomonas. There are some indications basil oil may help restore immune function damaged by stress. Basil oil also helps the active ingredients of other herbs more readily penetrate the skin when basil oil is added to ointments, liniments, and salves. Dried basil leaf can be added directly to food or drunk as a tea (1/2 teaspoon of dried herb steeped for 10 minutes in 1 cup of boiling water in a closed container) to relieve flatulence and fullness.

Precautions

The German Commission E advised caution in the use of basil because of the estragole in its essential oil might cause cancer, but later testing indicated that an increased risk of cancer would only occur in persons who ate approximately 1,000 kilograms (over a ton) of the herb daily, a finding so impossible as to suggest the Commission's precaution was completely unwarranted. Nonetheless, the safety of the herb has not been established for pregnant women, nursing mothers, or children under six.

Basil, Sweet

Botanical: *Ocimum basilicum* (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Labiatae

---Part Used---Herb.

- [Description](#)
- [History](#)

---Description---Common or Sweet Basil which is used in medicine and also for culinary purposes, especially in France, is a hairy, labiate plant, growing about 3 feet high. The stem is obtusely quadrangular, the labiate flowers are white, in whorls in the axils of the leaves, the calyx with the upper lobe rounded and spreading. The leaves, greyish-green beneath and dotted with dark oil cells, are opposite, 1 inch long and 1/3 inch broad, stalked and peculiarly smooth, soft and cool to the touch, and if slightly bruised exale a delightful scent of cloves.

There are several varieties, differing in the size, shape, odour and colour of the leaves. The Common Basil has very dark green leaves, the curled-leaved has short spikes of flowers, the narrow-leaved smells like Fennel, another has a scent of citron and another a tarragon scent, one species has leaves of three colours, and another 'studded' leaves.

---History---The derivation of the name Basil is uncertain. Some authorities say it comes from the Greek *basileus*, a king, because, as Parkinson says, 'the smell thereof is so excellent that it is fit for a king's house,' or it may have been termed royal, because it was used in some regal unguent or medicine. One rather unlikely theory is that it is shortened from *basilisk*, a fabulous creature that could kill with a look. This theory may be based on a strange old superstition that connected the plant with scorpions. Parkinson tells us that 'being gently handled it gave a pleasant smell but being hardly wrung and bruised would breed scorpions. It is also observed that scorpions doe much rest and abide under these pots and vessells wherein Basil is planted.' It was generally believed that if a sprig of Basil were left under a pot it would in time turn to a scorpion. Superstition went so far as to affirm that even smelling the plant might bring a scorpion into the brain.

Culpepper says:

'Being applied to the place bitten by venomous beasts, or stung by a wasp or hornet, it speedily draws the poison to it. - *Every like draws its like*. Mizaldus affirms, that being laid to rot in horse-dung, it will breed venomous beasts. Hilarius, a French physician, affirms upon his own knowledge, that an acquaintance of his, by common smelling to it, had a scorpion breed in his brain.'

In India the Basil plant is sacred to both Krishna and Vishnu, and is cherished in every Hindu house. Probably on account of its virtues, in disinfecting, and vivifying malarious air, it first became inseparable from Hindu houses in India as the protecting spirit of the family.

The strong aromatic scent of the leaves is very much like cloves.

Every good Hindu goes to his rest with a Basil leaf on his breast. This is his passport to Paradise.