

Did You Know?



Tarragon, *Artemesia dracunculus*

- *Dracunculus* means little dragon. This either refers to the serpent-like, coil shaped root system (and possibly the leaves shaped like a dragon's tongue) or, at one time, tarragon was used to treat venomous bites such as spider bites ("poisonous serpents").
 - In medieval lore, tarragon was placed in the shoes of those embarking on a pilgrimage to give them strength.
 - There are a number of species referred to as tarragon that are distinctly different from each other.
 - French tarragon is *Artemesia dracunculus* 'Sativa' is the type typically used for culinary purposes due to its distinctive anise-like flavor. It rarely flowers and is most often propagated through root division and cuttings or transplants.
 - Russian tarragon, *Artemesia dranculoides*, closely resembles French tarragon but it does flower and set seed, has rougher leaves and does not have an appealing flavor.
 - Mexican tarragon, *Tagetes lucida*, is in the same family as the marigold. This plant is also known as Texas tarragon or Mexican mint marigold since the flavor of the leaves are similar to French tarragon. It is popular in Texas and other warm climates where French tarragon does not grow well.
 - French tarragon is noted for use in the French blend *fines herbes*. It is essential to Béarnaise sauce, as well as hollandaise sauce. It is added to, marinades and rubs and pairs well with egg dishes, vegetables, poultry, fish, cheeses and fruit.
 - French tarragon has the flavor of anise and chewing on a leaf will numb the tip of the tongue. Russian tarragon lacks both of these qualities.
 - Tarragon is a perennial which grows best in a sunny, dry location with average, well-drained soil. It will tolerate partial shade, especially in warmer climates but does not do well in the deep south. Frequent pruning encourages bushy growth.
 - Tarragon has had historical medicinal uses to treat issues such as intestinal worms, toothaches, hiccups, indigestion, joint pain and water retention to name a few. Today tarragon is known for being an antioxidant with antiseptic, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory and antiviral qualities.
 - Tarragon is used in commercial flavoring as well as in the cosmetology and perfume industries.
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