

Did You Know?



Chamomile, *Matricaria chamomilla*

- The German chamomile, *Matricaria chamomilla*, also known as *M. recutita* is native to southern and eastern Europe and western Asia, though it now grows widely through temperate disturbed areas, meadows and fields.
- The Roman or English chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) is similar looking, though is a shorter growing plant and tends to have a more bitter taste than the German chamomile. Both are used for medicinal purposes interchangeably.
- Egyptians, Romans and Greeks used chamomile to treat many conditions. Chamomile's medicinal history is due to its anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, anti-allergenic, and sedative properties. It has been used around the world to treat digestive issues, rheumatic problems, rashes and other skin conditions, allergies (though is also a ragweed relative), and to reduce anxiety and insomnia. Preparations include teas, salves, lotions, capsules, compresses and vapors.
- While chamomile is often recognized as a sleep promoting herb, it was also known as a sure preventative of nightmares.
- Chamomile oil, though a beautiful blue color, can be added to shampoos to bring out highlights to blonde hair.
- Chamomile flowers can be used to create a yellow-brown fabric dye.
- The cheerful white daisy-like flowers symbolized patience in adversity to the Victorians. German chamomile is a reseeding annual, which grows up to 30" tall in full sun.
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- Harvest the apple-scented flowers of German chamomile regularly, when the flowers are fully open, for continued bloom production.
- Air dry the flowers in a single layer, on screens and away from direct sunlight, before storing them in airtight containers. Stems can also be cut, gathered and hung to dry.
- Chamomile flowers can be used fresh or dried to make tea. The tea is often said to promote relaxation, stress-relief and sleep.
- The petals are edible and can be used fresh in salads or the flavor can be infused in other beverages, oatmeal, syrups or incorporated into fruit dishes. In addition, they are used in sleep pillows, potpourri, bath tea blends and other cosmetic and craft uses.

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