

THE HERB COTTAGE

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Spearmint

It is said Spearmint has been grown in English Gardens since the 9th Century. It was used as a strewing herb in banquet halls, churches and homes due to its pungent scent and to repel insects and rodents. Today, as then, Spearmint is used in teas and other infusions to help meld flavors and just because it tastes good.

It is considered a cooling and drying herb that helps cool the body by opening the pores to let the heat out. This is why it's used as a fever reducer as well as a cooling summer herb in teas. It is also useful to alleviate stomach issues such as gas and bloating feeling. It can help ease nausea and vomiting. It is safe for most everyone including children. As always, pregnant women should consult a practitioner before using the herb in medicinal doses.

To make Spearmint Tea:

Use approximately 2 teaspoon fresh herbs for each cup of water (about 6-8 ounces). Pour boiling water over your fresh herbs (you may slightly bruise the leaves to help release their flavors) in a china or glass pot. Metals, including stainless steel, may alter the flavor of the tea. Steep for only 5 to 10 minutes for best flavor. The strain the leaves out of the brew. The tea should be lightly colored and mild. Pour and enjoy plain or with a little dollop of honey or a squeeze of lemon.

For iced tea, use double the amount of herbs rather than steeping the infusion longer. Longer infusion can cause bitterness. Pour the hot or warm tea over ice and enjoy with lemon or honey.

You may use dried herbs for tea also. Just remember dried herbs have a stronger flavor so only use about 1 teaspoon per cup and proceed as for fresh herbs.