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## ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH378



### MINT

#### PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

Thomas M. Blessington, David L. Clement, and Kevin G. Williams  
Central Maryland Research and Education Center  
University of Maryland

#### INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Mint or Spearmint
- Scientific name: *Mentha spicata*
- The word mint comes from the Greek *minthe*, derived from a figure in Greek mythology
- Native to Europe and Asia
- Aromatic annual herb with widespread underground rhizomes
- Opposite, downy leaves with a serrated margin.
- Leaves can be dark green, grey green, purple, or blue
- Small flowers are densely arranged in rings in the axils of the upper leaves, forming cylindrical, slender, tapering spikes, pinkish or lilac in color.

- Hardy to zone 4
- Mint leaves contain menthol, giving spearmint and peppermint their characteristic aromas
- Mint oils are used to flavor food, candy, tea, mouthwash, and toothpaste
- Mint aids digestion and is a strong diuretic

#### GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Grows best in deep media high in organic matter
- High water requirement; media must be well-drained while holding water
- Grows well in partial shade
- Preferred pH range of 6.0 – 7.0

- Fast growing; can be invasive, develops an extensive network of rhizomes
- Planting in containers is recommended due to the plant's invasive nature

### PROPAGATION

- Growth from seed can be unreliable
- Cuttings from the rhizomes of healthy plants can be used for propagation
- Cuttings can be taken during the summer, always choosing young shoots
- Cut into 1 to 3 inch sections with at least one growth bud
- Insert into the new growth medium vertically with the bud toward the top
- Water when growth is evident; transplant after the plant has set roots
- Plant again in shallow trenches, covering with 2 inches of media
- Beds benefit from a top dressing of rich soil applied in autumn

### DISORDERS

- Rust (*Puccinia mentha*)
  - Remove all plants that show signs of rust
  - Do not use infected beds again for several years
- Caterpillars
  - Can be removed by hand

### CONSUMER CARE

- Harvesting should take place on a sunny day after all dew has disappeared

- When plants break into bloom, cut the stalk a few inches above the root. Remove imperfect leaves and hang the stems to dry.
- Leaves may be stripped from the stems when thoroughly dry.
- If a long supply is needed, plant one bed in sun and another in shade
- When growing several varieties, do not plant them close to one another to avoid cross-pollination
- Mice are averse to the smell of mint
- Mint repels harmful insects and attracts beneficial ones
- Mint oils are used as an environmentally friendly insecticide

### CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *M. piperita* (peppermint): strong, sweet mint flavor; shiny, dark green leaves.
- *M. viridis* (spearmint): flavor milder and less sweet than peppermint
- *M. suaveolens* (pineapple mint): popular and particularly mild

### References

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentha>
- <http://www.herbalgardens.com/archives/herb-monthly-archive/mint.html>
- <http://botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/m/mints-39.html>
- <http://www.superbherbs.net/mint.htm>

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