

Tarragon

(Artemisia dracunculus)

Peppery and tongue-numbing, with a hint of anise, tarragon is essential to French cuisine. Tarragon often is associated with vinegar and fish. Historically it was placed in shoes of travelers to prevent fatigue.

Culinary uses

One of the French *finest herbes*, tarragon should be used sparingly because it can be overpowering. Toss its leaves in salads, bearnaise sauce, tartar sauce, and French dressing. Tarragon also is delightful with fish, shellfish, meats, poultry, and vegetables, and in herb vinegars.

Medicinal uses

Tarragon is said to sweeten breath, relieve flatulence and colic, and cure rheumatism. It also was used as a local anesthetic when treating toothaches.

Cultivation

Tarragon is fairly easily propagated from seed, cuttings (early fall), or division (early spring). It prefers rich soil in a protected location. Thin or transplant to 2 feet apart and divide every two to three years. Cut back in the autumn.