

Mentha arvensis

[Synonyms : *Mentha angustifolia*, *Mentha arvensis* subsp. *borealis*, *Mentha arvensis* var. *canadensis*, *Mentha arvensis* var. *glabrata*, *Mentha arvensis* subsp. *haplocalyx*, *Mentha arvensis* var. *lanata*, *Mentha arvensis* subsp. *parietariifolia*, *Mentha arvensis* var. *villosa*, *Mentha austriaca*, *Mentha canadensis*, *Mentha glabrior*, *Mentha lapponica*, *Mentha palustris*, *Mentha parietariifolia*, *Mentha penardii*]

FIELD MINT is an annual or perennial. Native to temperate regions in Asia, Africa and North America, it has tiny, pale lilac or white flowers.

It is also known as *Ackerminze* (German), *Åkermynta* (Swedish), American mint, Apple mint, *Baume des champs* (French), *Bijanggut* (Sundanese), Brook mint, Canadian mint, *Chinesische Minze* (German), Corn mint, *Janggal* (Javanese), Japanese mint, Japanese peppermint, *Japanische Minze* (German), Lamb's tongue, *Menta arvense* (Spanish), *Máta rolní* (Czech), *Mentaster* (Italian), Mint, *Mintys y Maes* (Welsh), *Mintys yr Ýd* (Welsh), *Muthina* (Malayalam), *Pohok* (Malay), *Pudina* (Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu), *Pudyanu* (Kashmiri), *Rantaminttu* (Finnish), *Té del río* (Spanish), Water calamint, Wild bergamont, Wild bergamot, Wild mint, Wild pennyroyal, and Wild peppermint.

Arvensis means 'of or growing in cultivated fields or land'.

In Ireland sprigs of field mint were laid on the corn stacks to deter mice. While in the West of England sheep shearers added it to pails of water in which they washed their hands as it removed grease and colouring.

Of all the mints authorities contend that field mint is the best prevention for milk curdling and thus it was once grown specifically with this in mind.

North American Indian tribes put it to great use. As a tea it was popular with the Kawaiisu, Dakota, Sanpoil, Blackfoot, Shuswap, Cheyenne, Okanagan-Colville and Paiute Indians. Records suggest that the Cherokee ate it as a food, and some of the Navajo, the Blackfoot, Saanich and Thompson tribes all used it for flavouring food (the latter especially with dried fish).

High regard for field mint was illustrated by the Cheyenne as it played a role in connection with their Sun Dance.

The leaves and stems provided an incense or fragrance for the home for the Montana Indian and Cheyenne tribes – while the Thompson, Flathead and Kutenai Indians scattered the leaves over meat or berries as an insect repellent. Its strong aroma seems to have been invaluable in other ways as the Thompson Indians laid drying fish on a layer of these leaves to counter the strong fish smell, while hunters or fishermen in the Dakota tribe applied a decoction to their traps to mask any human scent on them.

A plant decoction also served Thompson and Cheyenne Indians as a hair dressing – and the Cheyenne used the leaves for an aphrodisiac.

Records also show that North American tribes harnessed the plant's medicinal virtues. It seems to have been especially popular for easing colds as it was used for this purpose by some of the Navajo, the Thompson, Kutenai, Flathead and Okanagan-Colville tribes – and excluding the Thompson Indians and including the Cherokee, they also used it for treating fever. It was used by the Algonkin for headaches – and by the Iroquois to cause

vomiting when this was necessary, and by the Cheyenne to stop vomiting. The Okanagan-Colville believed that it was suitable for treating wind in children, and they and the Kawaiisu also chose it to ease pain (generally) in adults. For the Flathead, and Kutenai Indians field mint offered a remedy for coughs, the Menominee used it for pneumonia, and the Thompson tribe and some of the Navajo took it for influenza. While the Cheyenne turned to the plant for treating some heart disorders, the Kutenai tribe used it as a remedy for various kidney problems. The latter also relied on it for easing rheumatism, and the Okanagan-Colville, some of the Navajo and the Kawaiisu all applied it to swellings. Flathead and Kutenai Indians took the plant as a tonic. The former also used it to ease toothache and some of the Navajo prescribed it as a stimulant.

Today in India field mint is particularly used as an ingredient in chutney and as a flavouring in food and drinks. It is also used as flavouring or scent in some cigarettes, toiletries and pharmaceutical products, and it can be an ingredient in mint flavoured confectionery, and toothpastes.