

## HABEK MINT



### *Mentha longifolia*

[MEN-thuh lon-jee-FOH-lee-uh]

**Family:** Labiatae

Names: Buddleia Mint, horse mint, Brook mint, wild mint; kruisement, balderjan (Afr.); Koena-ya-thaba; inixina, inzinziniba (Xhosa); ufuthana lomhlanga (Zulu), Phileel, Jungali Podina; Aarmunt, Garden Mint, Hertsmunt, Menthol Mint, Mint, Field Mint, Na'Na', Sage Of Bethlem, Silver Mint, Spearmint, Yabani Nane, Yerba Buena, Himalayan mint, biblical mint, Ross-Minze, Silberminze (German), Harmaaminttu (Finnish); gråmynta (Swedish);

**Description:** The robust mint has pointed smoothly hairy leaves with a camphoraceous smell. The flowers are in long pointed spikes of mauve whorled florets like the flower spikes of the buddleia shrub from which it gets its common name. It displays greater variability than any other plant species. It varies considerably in height, inflorescence, the size and shape of leaves and the degree of hairiness. To confuse the issue further it crosses freely

with other mints and hybrids are of frequent occurrence.

**Cultivation:** An easily grown plant, it succeeds in most soils and situations so long as the soil is not too dry. Grows well in heavy clay soils. A sunny position is best for production of essential oils, but the plants also succeed in partial shade. Most mints have fairly aggressive spreading roots and, unless you have the space to let them roam, they need to be restrained by some means such as planting them in containers that are buried in the soil. Hybridizes freely with other members of this genus. A good companion plant for growing near cabbages and tomatoes, helping to keep them free of insect pests. Members of this genus are rarely if ever troubled by browsing deer. Sow seed in spring in a cold frame. Germination is usually fairly quick. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and plant them out in the summer. Mentha species are very prone to hybridization and so the seed cannot be relied on to breed true. Even without hybridization, seedlings will not be uniform and so the content of medicinal oils etc will vary. When growing plants with a particular aroma it is best to propagate them by division. Division can be easily carried out at almost any time of the year, though it is probably best done in the spring or autumn to allow the plant to establish more quickly. Virtually any part of the root is capable of growing into a new plant. Larger divisions can be planted out direct into their permanent positions. However, for maximum increase it is possible to divide the roots up into sections no more than 3cm long and pot these up in light shade in a cold frame. They will quickly become established and can be planted out in the summer.

**History:** Because it is extensively cultivated in the Middle East, this species is presumed to be the mint of the New Testament. (Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42). The Pharisees paid their tithes in mint (*Mentha longifolia* 'Habak'), anise, and cumin according to Biblical record. Plains Indian used this mint for backaches and to treat the early symptoms of cholera

**Constituents:** Volatile oil, the major component of which is eoxypulegone

**Properties:** Carminative, stimulant, Antiasthmatic; Antiseptic; Antispasmodic.

**Medicinal Uses:** A popular traditional medicine. It is mainly used for respiratory ailments but many other uses have also been recorded. It is mostly the leaves that are used, usually to make a tea that is drunk for coughs, colds, stomach cramps, asthma, flatulence, indigestion and headaches. Externally, wild mint has been used to treat wounds and swollen glands. The infusion of leaves is taken as a cooling medicine. Dried leaves and flowers tops are carminative and stimulant. It is believed to be the best remedy for headaches. In parts of Africa it is used for ophthalmic diseases. The leaves are harvested as the plant comes into flower and can be dried for later use. It will make a soothing drink for coughs and colds. The essential oil in the leaves is antiseptic, though it is toxic in large doses. Externally it has been used to treat wounds and swollen glands.

*Dosage:* Infusions or decoctions of the leaves are drunk or administered as enemas. Crushed leaves are inserted in the nostrils for the relief of headache or placed under the bedding of someone suffering from breathing problems.

**Culinary Uses:** Early in spring the fresh young leaves of this mint are almost glabrous and can be used for culinary purposes in place of spearmint. It is used in Middle Eastern and Greek cooking. The leaves are peppermint-scented and used as a flavoring in salads,

chutneys and cooked foods. A herb tea is made from the leaves. An essential oil obtained from the leaves and flowering tops is used as a food flavoring in sweets etc. A peppermint-like taste.

**References:**

The Book of Mint, Denise Greig, Kangaroo Press, 1989; ISBN: 0-86417-220-6  
Plants for a Future Database

HERBALPEDIA™ is brought to you by The Herb Growing & Marketing Network, PO Box 245, Silver Spring, PA 17575-0245; 717-393-3295; FAX: 717-393-9261; email: herbworld@aol.com URL: <http://www.herbnet.com> and <http://www.herbworld.com> Editor: Maureen Rogers. Copyright 2005. All rights reserved. Subscription fee: \$48/yr. Material herein is derived from journals, textbooks, etc. THGMN cannot be held responsible for the validity of the information contained in any reference noted herein, for the misuse of information or any adverse effects by use of any stated material presented.

