

# How to grow: MINT

"An easy-to-grow perennial herb perfect for small pots and planters. It's perfect for adding a fresh flavour and fragrant aroma to various foods and drinks"

## Essential Kit:

9cm Thermoformed Pots  
25cm Black Pots  
Half-Size Seed Tray  
High Nitrogen Fertiliser  
Growmore Fertiliser 7-7-7



### GENERAL GROWING TIPS

Mint has been used for centuries as a medicinal herb easing digestive other health related issues. Nowadays we use it in cooking sweet and savoury dishes as well as having its strong and distinctive aroma garnish and flavour many different drinks.

Whilst you can pick up a pot of living or cut mint, at most supermarkets it is also incredibly easy to grow at home either inside, or in the garden. It's best to grow it in a pot rather than in a bed as it can be a bit of a thug. If left untended it spreads very quickly, taking over herb beds and borders with scant regard for its neighbours.

If you want to plant it in a bed then use a bottomless pot sunk into the ground. This restricts the spread of the rhizomes it sends out which will travel a fair distance in a season. From time to time, take the mint out of the pot and thin it out to prevent it becoming pot bound, which will eventually affect its growth.

### PROPAGATE FROM CUTTINGS

To propagate your mint all you need is a single stem around 12-15cm long. Make sure the bottom of the stem has a nice fresh cut and strip off the lower sets of leaves to expose around 6-7cm of stem.

Place in a small container of water and leave somewhere warm with bright, indirect light. Within 2-3 weeks, you will start to see roots shooting from the nodes on the stem. It may take longer to root in winter when temperatures are cooler and there is less light.

Wait until it has formed a strong set of roots that are 4 or 5 cm long before potting up. I prefer to use a 9cm pot filled with potting compost mixed with some perlite or vermiculite to help drainage.

Nipping out the top of the stem encourages bushier growth, and remember to keep the compost moist but not waterlogged.

### PROPAGATE USING RHIZOMES

If you have a well-established plant in a pot then it is easy to propagate new mint plants.

Remove the mint from the pot to reveal the root-

stalk (rhizome) circling around the outside of the root ball. These strong rootstalks have the ability to send out new roots and shoots which create multiple new plants.

Slice the root ball vertically in half, or quarters if the pot is large enough. You can repot one of the halves in the centre of a pot before adding fresh compost with a little added perlite or vermiculite around the outside. You now have a newly potted up mint plant.

With the remaining half, tease out the rootstalks from around the outside and cut into 10 or 15cm lengths. Place a layer of the same compost mix in the bottom of a seed tray before laying the rootstalk cuttings on top. Cover with a layer of compost, water and leave in a warm greenhouse or windowsill. Within 7-10 days, you will start to see the new shoots of mint appearing. At this point grow them on until they are established and ready to pot up into multiple pots, or, be planted in a larger pot.

### GROWING MINT OVER WINTER

Mint, when grown outside, will naturally slow down growing as winter approaches. At this point, you should be cutting the plant back to 5 cm above the ground. This will help to protect the plants from pests and disease which otherwise could lay dormant until the springtime. If used as a houseplant it can grow quite happily on the kitchen windowsill all year round.

### HARVESTING YOUR MINT

Mint is a naturally quite hardy and will produce healthy fragrant leaves that are rich in essential oils. Many people will pinch off a few leaves to make a nice refreshing herbal tea. However if you are looking to harvest larger amounts during the growing season then there are a few basic guidelines to follow.

You want to cut the stems down to about half height just before they bloom. Keep an eye out for the small flower buds as they appear and use this as your cue to harvest. I recommend harvesting before they flower to make sure the mint is still high in essential oils which otherwise will naturally weaken.

In their first year, only harvest once to help stimulate root growth and get the plant properly established. In subsequent years, you can then harvest two or even three times. Use a high nitrogen fertiliser after harvesting to boost growth ready for your final autumn cut.

### HOW TO STORE MINT

Mint has a variety of uses and can be stored in a few different ways to provide a quick burst of flavour for all kinds of sweet and savoury food and drinks. Try freezing it packed into ice cube trays, topped up with water, in quantities that will be useful for your style of cooking. Alternatively use a dehydrator to dry the leaves ready for using in mint tea or savoury dishes. When dehydrating the leaves it works best to remove the main stalk to remove as much water as possible. I also slice down the centre of each leaf to make peeling the central vein out as easy as possible. Again, this helps remove moisture from the leaf and makes drying quicker and more effective for storing in airtight glass jars.

## Need to know:



### SOW:

March to May



### PLANT:

May to June



### HARVEST:

June to Nov



### SPACING:

50-60cm



### LOCATION:

Plant in full sun or partial shade