

French Tarragon, Mugwort

Family	Asteraceae
Botanical	Artemisia dracunculus
Parts Used	Leaves
USDA Hardiness	4A - 8B
Light	Full Sun to Partial Shade
Soil	Well drained
Duration	Perennial



Propagation	Soil pH requirements: 6.6 to 7.5 (neutral). By dividing the rootball By dividing rhizomes, herbaceous stem cuttings or simple layering. Plant does not set seed, flowers are sterile.
Water	As needed, do not overwater
Growing	Well-behaved in the garden, French tarragon does not spread underground like other herbs, nor will it reseed. In fact, it rarely flowers and never produces seeds. That means that new plants must be produced from rooted cuttings in order to have the classic tarragon flavor. Russian tarragon is seed grown and less desirable in flavor. Remember to cut back browned foliage in spring to make way for new growth. Where it prospers, divide the plant every third year to renew it. Be sure to locate plant in a bed that drains well, or the roots can rot.

Medicinal Uses	Antifungal, Antispasmodic, Aromatic, Carminative, Emmenagogue and Refrigerant
Benefits	Stress, Anxiety, Hiccups, Gas, Shock, Indigestion, Loss of appetite, a natural diuretic, laxative and antispasmodic.
Preparation	Tarragon has never been highly valued as a medicinal herb but it makes up for it by being a star in the kitchen.

Fines Herbes

Culinary Uses

French tarragon is a traditional seasoning with eggs, poultry, salads, cheese, and fish. Tarragon chicken salad is a particular favorite, ideal for a summer lunch. Include it in seasoning blends such as fines herbes and bouquet garni. It is a must-have ingredient for Sauce Béarnaise. Also, French tarragon makes an excellent herb-flavored vinegar, alone or in combination with other herbs.

Chicken Salad with Fresh Tarragon and Peas

(Makes 4-6 servings)

Ingredients:

3 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts

(about 3 1/2 cups diced cooked chicken)

2 cups chicken stock or broth

enough water to cover chicken

1/2 tsp. poultry seasoning

3/4 cup chopped celery

3/4 cup chopped red onion

1 cup frozen peas, thawed and drained well

scant T chopped fresh tarragon (should be French Tarragon for this recipe)

salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

Dressing Ingredients:

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 T fresh lemon juice

2 tsp. Dijon mustard

Instructions:

Trim all visible fat and tendons from chicken breasts, then place in a pan where they can fit in a single layer. Put in chicken stock and poultry seasoning, add enough water to cover chicken and simmer on very low heat about 6 minutes.

Turn off heat and let chicken sit in the hot stock for about 15 minutes more.

While chicken finishes cooking, mix together mayonnaise, lemon juice, and Dijon mustard.

Remove chicken from stock and let cool, then cut or shred into bite sized pieces. Place in salad bowl and add celery, red onion, peas, and chopped French Tarragon. Stir in dressing until all ingredients are lightly covered (you may not need all the dressing, depending on how much you like mayonnaise.) Season with salt and pepper to taste (I didn't use much of either.) Refrigerate for about 30 minutes before serving to let flavors develop, then serve.

This salad will keep in the refrigerator for a day or two if you can manage to keep it around for that long.



Historical Facts

Artemisia, tarragon's genus, comes from the Greek goddess Artemis (of the moon), known as Diana by the Romans, who was said to have given tarragon and other artemisias to Chiron, the centaur. Tarragon has only been cultivated for around 600 years. It is thought to have been brought to Italy around the tenth Century by invading Mongols who used it as a sleep aid, breath freshener and seasoning. It is believed St. Catherine, on a visit to Pope Clement VI, brought tarragon to France in the 14th century. Gerard places it in England in 1548.

Additional Tips

Nutrition Facts

Tarragon is an excellent source of minerals such as magnesium, iron, zinc, and calcium. The herb is rich in Vitamin A and Vitamin C as well as B-6.