

# Tarragon

## *Artemisia dracunculus*



### Tarragon Benefits

*Tarragon (Artemisia dracunculus) is an aromatic herb that is considered one of the four finest seasoning ingredients in traditional French cooking. Also commonly known as estragon and dragon herb, this perennial plant is native to most of the Northern Hemisphere including Europe, Asia, India, western North America and parts of northern Mexico.*

Averaging about four feet in height when mature, the slender green leaves produced from branched stems of this herb contain aromas and flavors similar to anise. Both the leaves and stems can be used, either fresh or dried, as seasoning in a wide variety of dishes. They are also often steeped in vinegar and soft drinks to impart their unique flavors into the surrounding liquids. There are written records of tarragon cultivation dating back to 500 B.C.

Variations include "French tarragon" (best for culinary use), "Russian tarragon" (typically better than wild tarragon but not as good as so-called French tarragon for culinary use), "wild tarragon" (covers various states).

While many people are familiar with the culinary uses for tarragon, most may not be aware of its unique medicinal qualities. This herb has been used by numerous cultures for centuries as a natural treatment for many ailments. In addition, it is a superb supplement to any diet because it is high in vitamins, potassium and other nutrients that have been proven to provide health benefits. Whether added to foods as a seasoning or taken as a supplement, there are many good reasons for making tarragon a part of an overall diet. Here are some of the ways tarragon has been proven to be such a beneficial herb.

### **Antioxidant Properties**

Tarragon, especially the Turkish variety, has antioxidant properties that can help neutralize the actions of free radicals throughout the body. Free radicals, which are a byproduct of metabolism, have been proven to damage cells unless they are quickly expelled as waste. Studies have found that tarragon oil works as a free radical scavenger to help stop or decrease the damage these radicals can cause.

### **Toothache Remedy**

Throughout history, tarragon has been widely used as an aid for toothaches. The ancient Greeks chewed it because of its ability to numb the mouth. This pain relieving effect is due to the high levels of eugenol found in the plant. This is the same pain relieving compound contained in clove oil. It has also been proven that tarragon can also help decrease the sore gums that often occur along with toothaches.

### **Appetite Stimulant**

Based upon several studies, tarragon appears to have chemicals that can help to increase appetites. Whether used as a seasoning herb in cooking or consumed raw as a small garnish, it may help people who have poor appetites due to age or illness.

### **Digestive Aid**

Tarragon has long been used as a digestive tonic because it aids in the production of bile by the liver. Not only can it improve natural digestion, but it has also been found to relieve common digestive problems like an upset stomach, irritable bowels and dyspepsia. It

has also been used in traditional folk remedies for ridding the bowels of intestinal worms.

### **Sedative**

Tarragon can be used as a mild sedative to help relieve anxiety and stress. It is also beneficial in promoting a good night's sleep.

### **Heart Health**

Tarragon contains chemicals that can help support cardiovascular health. These chemicals can assist in keeping blood platelets and other compounds from adhering and accumulating in the heart's blood vessels.

### **Female Health**

Tarragon has proven useful as a supplement for women who suffer from suppressed menstruation. It has also been promoted as a means for maintaining the overall health of the female reproductive tract. However, it has been found that tarragon should not be used for these reasons while pregnant or nursing.

### **Eye Function**

Because it is rich in potassium and the Vitamin A precursor beta carotene, tarragon can assist in the overall health and function of the eyes.

### **Building Muscle Mass/Weight Control**

Recent studies have shown that tarragon, primarily the Russian variety, helps to increase muscle creatine absorption. This is similar to the muscle creatine absorption that occurs when large amounts of carbohydrates are ingested. Since tarragon creates the same effect, consuming large amounts of carbohydrates is no longer necessary to increase muscle mass. Similarly, this property of tarragon can also be developed for use in weight control programs.

Today, the medicinal benefits of tarragon can easily become a part of any diet whether it is in the form of pills, powders, teas, used as a seasoning or consumed raw. The appropriate dosage will depend on several factors including age, overall health and other medical conditions.