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July 2015 Newsletter

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Last meet

Donna gave a very interesting talk about her bees. She is so passionate about them that she gives the impression that she can share their minds. They are very clever creatures and after learning about them, our members see them in a different light.



Donna can give advice when setting up a new hive, and sells honey and has access to beeswax.

In the Garden

It is planting time—for some things at least!

Hard to believe when the air and ground is still so cold, but I have it on good authority that now is the time to plant most fruit trees, including citrus, and new roses.

July is also the start of rose pruning time for existing roses, and while you have the secateurs out, cut back any untidy growth of lavenders and rosemary plants too.

You can still set garlic and shallots if you didn't quite manage by shortest day.

And, obvious from the sudden increase in stock, it is also prime strawberry planting time.

Other berries like blueberries and red currants are also ready for planting in July.

Getting your garden beds ready for spring planting is a must this month, dig in green crops or work in seaweed, manure and compost.

Herbs that can be sown now include: dianthus, pansies, chives, mustard greens, rocket and fennel. While chili, sunflowers and oregano can be started in a warmer area in seed trays.

Next Meet

Monday, 13 Jul, 7.30pm
Milford Primary
30 Shakespeare Rd
Milford

**Workshop: Herbal
Face Cream
Herb: Mallow**

Herb Group Notes and News

To members attending the workshop on 13 July, please can you bring with a dark pill bottle to save your Geranium and Almond face cream in? We do have a few smaller glass jars, but they are see-through, and will need to be stored in a dark place.

All other ingredients will be supplied and are free to members.

Please also remember the trading table—bring with any herb related items that you wish to sell, or anything you think will be of use to our members.

You are also most welcome to bring with any plants that you would like help with identifying—we have some very clever group members who will be happy to take a look.



Turmeric

Drinking and eating Turmeric, a touted superfood, has become all the craze. Recipes and benefits are listed on many alternative healthcare websites, passed along in Facebook and other social media, and even endorsed by high profiled celebrities.

From helping to alleviate stressors in the blood, to relieving arthritis and even reversing certain cancers, a lot of positive has been attributed to this humble spice.

I thought it might be a good idea to learn a bit more about Turmeric as a herb.

Description

Curcuma longa

Also known as Indian Saffron, Indian Yellow Root, Curcuma, and Geelwortel.

Native to India, The East Indies and China, this tender perennial grows to about 60cm high and has large lance-shaped leaves. In the late spring to midsummer, pale yellow flowers are borne on spikes.



By Aravind Sivaraj

It is however the large fragrant, deep orange fleshed rhizomatous



By Simon A. Eugster

rootstock that holds the value of this spice.

History, Myths and Legends

In most languages, the name of the plant simply translates to “yellow root”, while Turmeric in English probably stems from the French *terre-mérite*, which means “meritorious earth”.

An ancient spice, mentioned since 600BC, it was used as a food, medicine and perfume.

Turmeric-paper (paper coated with a decoction of turmeric root), was the most reliable way to indicate the alkalinity of a substance, before Litmus paper.

In various cultures, dabbing a paste of turmeric on parts of the body (e.g. a pregnant tummy), was believed to ward off evil spirits, while burning turmeric exorcised unwelcome ghosts.



By McKay Savage

Propagating and Growing

Turmeric prefers humid conditions, and does well in a rich and loamy soil.

Propagate by planting small pieces of root about 8cm deep and roughly 30cm apart.

It is tender, so protect from winds and frosts.

Harvesting, Drying and Storing

The whole plant is lifted, taking care not to damage the rhizomes, a few smaller “fingers” can be removed. Use fresh, or dry the roots after boiling/steaming. Ground dried rhizomes finely to create turmeric powder.

Store in darkness, as it is very sensitive to light.

Uses

Culinary

Turmeric is widely used in Asia and the Middle-east, particularly in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Thailand, and Persia.

In South Africa, it is common in Cape-Malay dishes such as Yellow Rice and Bobotie.

Turmeric

The spice is mildly bitter, slightly peppery and fragrant.

It is used as a culinary dye for liqueurs, cheeses and sauces, and has been used in colouring butters and margarines, prepared stocks and mustards.

Rice is often coloured and flavoured with turmeric, while its addition to curries is the most important culinary use.

The leaves of Turmeric are also used in Malaysian dishes to steam meats, and are added, shredded, to curries.



Classic Indian Curry

- 4 small hot dried red chilies, deseeded
- ¼ cup cumin seeds
- ¼ cup coriander seeds
- 2 Tbsp whole black peppercorns
- 1 Tbsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cardamom seeds
- 1 tsp whole cloves
- 1 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 Tbsp ground turmeric
- 1 Tbsp dried powdered curry leaves

Roast the spices (except turmeric and curry leaves) in a preheated oven (180°C) for 15 minutes, making sure they don't burn. Grind the roast spices with a spice mill with the curry leaves and turmeric to a fine powder. Store in a cool, dark, dry place. (*A World of Curries, Dave Dewitt & Arthur Pais, Little Brown*)

Medicinal

Besides being a popular spice, Turmeric has long been used in traditional medicines—being found in Ayurvedic texts, Siddha medicine systems, and ancient Chinese herbals.

Turmeric is listed as alterative, antiseptic, analgesic, emmenagogue, stimulant, astringent, immune boosting, choleric and cholagogue.

Nutritionally it is high in iron and manganese and is a good source of vitamins, particularly vitamin B6, as well as dietary fibre and potassium.

Here are a few body systems to which turmeric may be of benefit:

Liver and gallbladder: - it may increase the production and discharge of bile, and is used in preventing and treating gallstones.

Stomach and gastrointestinal tract: - it is said to improve peristalsis and may be helpful in healing ulcers. It is being studied as a treatment for inflammatory bowel disorders such as Crohn's.



Cuts and wounds: - it is antibacterial and healing - bathe sores with a turmeric decoction and bandage.

Skin: - it was traditionally used for ailments such as eczema, shingles, chicken pox, allergies and scabies.

Inflammation and arthritis: - it is particularly effective in relieving inflammation—topically some studies confirm it surpasses the effect of hydrocortisone. It has proven effective in relieving the pain caused by arthritis.

Heart and circulatory system: - it is suggested as a good blood cleanser and blood invigorator. It dilates blood vessels and can reduce blood pressure. It has been quoted as preventative in heart disease.

Female reproductive system: - may regulate menses and relieve cramps.

Anti-carcinogenic: - many claims have been made regarding turmeric's action to prevent and even cure certain cancers (including breast, prostate, lung and colon cancers). While studies are still being done, preliminary results show that the active constituent curcumin in the spice may prevent tumour formation and slow the spread of cancer in the body. It is also potentially antioxidant.

Brain and Nervous system: - it is a stress reducing spice that may help with better sleep patterns, and could alleviate depression. It has shown great promise in studies to prevent or reverse Alzheimer's, and is also being studied in relation to Mul-

Turmeric

tiple Sclerosis.

Other medicinal actions

Turmeric has also been said to be beneficial against loss of appetite, bloating, headaches, colds and flu, bronchitis, fevers, depression, diabetes, water retention, worms, and mouth sores.

Piperine, a component in black pepper, may enhance the absorption of curcumin (the active compound in Turmeric to which many of the health benefits are attributed) by 2000%

With Turmeric seeing an unprecedented interest recently in healthy living and alternative medicine circles, many scientific studies have been commissioned to find out just how true the health claims of turmeric use are.

It is important to note that most research on Turmeric is done with high levels of the standardised extract, curcumin.

Dosage:

The University of Maryland Medical Centre suggests the following as acceptable adult dosages per day of turmeric preparations:

- Cut root: 1.5 - 3 g
- Dried, powdered root: 1 - 3 g

- Standardized powder (curcumin): 400 - 600 mg, 3 times per day
- Fluid extract (1:1) 30 - 90 drops
- Tincture (1:2): 15 - 30 drops, 4 times per day



Safety

As with all herbs, care should be taken when used as a medicine. All the text in this document is for information purposes only, and should not be used to diagnose or treat medical conditions. Please check with your health care provider.

Although turmeric is **generally safe**, and not a common allergen, very high levels of consumption may cause nausea. There are certain special warnings too, take extra care when pregnant or breastfeeding, if you have gallbladder problems, suffer from bleeding disorders, are going for surgery or have an iron deficiency.

Extra Recipes

Crisp Fried Eggplant

- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cayenne powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- salt
- 4 Tbsp semolina
- 2 large eggplants
- corn oil for frying

Mix together the spices, salt and semolina. Then cut the eggplants into discs, ¼inch thick. Heat a little oil in a skillet. Coat each disc with the spiced semolina and sauté in hot oil, turning over until both sides are crisp and golden. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on a paper towel. Serve immediately. (*The Indian Spice Kitchen, Monisha Bharadwaj, Dutton, 1997*)

Golden Turmeric Milk

There are many variations of this health giving evening drink on the net, the one that I have been taking is as follow (quantities indicative only, go according to the flavour you like best):

- Fresh turmeric root, cut, about 3-4cm long
- Fresh ginger root, cut, about 2cm long
- Black Pepper, ground, two twists of my pepper grinder
- Cinnamon (1/4 teaspoon sprinkle if powder, or a small cinnamon quill in the milk)
- Cup of milk, almond or coconut milk.
- Honey to taste

Place milk and all spices in a saucepan and gently heat through—do not boil. Add honey to taste and enjoy!

References

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