Apple mint (Woolly mint)

Mentha suavolens



Height: Up to 60cm

Suitable for: Moist, rich soil in partial shade.

Summary: Apple mint is a lovely aromatic mint, with fragrant foliage which is bright green and slightly hairy. It is a vigorous grower and can reach 60cm or more each season with spikes of pale lilac flowers in summer.

The leaves have a mild fruity taste and a slight apple scent, hence the name. It is a great culinary mint pairing well with fruit, cheese and all manner of drinks.

More information:

Apple mint is a decorative herb with many culinary and medicinal properties. It grows and spreads swiftly so is best grown in a container if you only have a small space and need to keep it confined.

This mint, like most others, prefers a rich moist soil in partial shade and will grow well in a large container.

By July or August the plant will be at least 60cm tall with terminal spikes of pale lilac flowers, which are very popular with insect life. The younger leaves are best to use so for a constant supply in the kitchen keep it trimmed back, removing and using whole stems stimulates new aromatic growth from the base.

The leaves of apple mint are best used fresh, as the flavour is less strong and minty than some of the other mints. The fresh fruity aroma makes it ideal for lots of different uses.

- Twist and bruise a good bunch of leaves and infuse in iced water and lemon slices to make a perfect summer refresher.
- Leaves can be dried to make tea in the winter months. Cut stems just before flowering and dry in bunches in a dark place. Crumble the dried leaves into airtight containers and store in the dark.
- Make salad dressing with finely chopped apple mint and orange juice shaken with olive oil.
- Great to use with fruit and desserts. Add the sliced leaves to your fruit salads, and pair with chocolate desserts. The smaller leaves and the flowers make a lovely edible garnish.

A quick side to rustle up to go with your main course, or even as part of a mixed meze feast, is:

Courgettes sautéed with lemon and mint

Slice about 500g courgettes about as thick as a pound coin.

Heat a wide frying pan and drizzle with a little olive oil.

Sauté the courgettes with the zest of a lemon, 2 finely chopped garlic cloves and ¼ tsp turmeric until they are tender and golden.

Toss in 1 tbsp each of finely chopped apple mint and garlic chives just before serving.

As well as culinary uses apple mint is useful around the home. Originally used as a strewing herb by the Greeks, its presence indicated hospitality.

- Hang bunches around the house in summer to freshen the air and deter flies.
- Incorporate flowering stems into your flower arrangements. Blanch the bottom 2cm of each stem in boiling water for 30 seconds first.
- Add the whole dried leaves to pot pourri mixtures.
- Crushed fresh leaves relieve the pain of insect bites