Vietnamese coriander

Persicaria odorata



Height: Up to 30cm

Suitable for: Warm and damp conditions. Pots and containers.

Summary: Also known as Vietnamese mint, Cambodian mint, Hot mint or Laksa leaf, it is a tropical perennial whose leaves are widely used in the South East Asian cooking. The leaves have a strong citrus aroma and taste, similar to coriander but lemony and spicy as well.

More information:

Vietnamese coriander is most commonly used in Vietnamese cooking but is also well used throughout the whole of S E Asia. It has many local names - *rau ram, daun kesom, daun laksa, phak phai, luam laws and phak phaew* to name but a few!

It is not actually a mint but tastes and looks quite similar hence it's English translated names.

The leaves are long and pointed and bright green in colour. Each mature leaf has a striking dark V marking on it's upper surface. The stems are purple and jointed at each leaf. Once established it makes rapid growth and if grown in a pot will need a good sized container by the end of the summer.

As it comes from the tropics it needs winter protection from frosts, a heated greenhouse or a cool window sill will be fine. It does not need too high a temperature just to be kept dry and above freezing. Plants for culinary use in winter will do well in a bright kitchen.

The younger leaves are the most tender when to be used raw, use in moderation to begin with as the taste is strong and can overpower if too much is used.

It is traditionally used in laksa and other Vietnamese soups based on coconut and noodles.

A herb to experiment with, try it in lots of different ways!

- Young leaves chopped fresh in salads.
- It has an affinity as a flavouring alongside lime, chilli and lemon grass.
- Try as a salad of shredded chicken and grated cabbage with Vietnamese coriander, lime juice and finely sliced green chilli.
- Use with noodle dishes, white meat and seafood. to retain the subtle flavours.
- Use in stir fries and curries, added towards the end of cooking time to retain the subtle flavours.

It is high in beta-carotene, iron, vitamin E and calcium, and the leaf contains up to 5.8% protein.

It assists and improves digestion as it has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties which protect the gastric system as a whole. In Australia there is research into growing Vietnamese coriander as a leaf crop for the extraction of kesom oil, much in demand by both food and fragrance industries.