

Did You Know?



Nasturtium, *Tropaeolum majus*

- The entire nasturtium plant is edible: the flowers and leaves have a peppery flavor, and the flower buds can be pickled and used as a substitute for capers.
- A native to South America, this plant is often grown as an annual.
- Introduced to Europe by the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century.
- The genus *Tropaeolum* has approximately 80 species of annual and perennial flowering plants.
- Flowers range from bright colors to pastels, yellows to red. Leaves are solid green or variegated.
- The long petiole attaches to the leaf in the middle of the round leaf, which resembled shields to Carl Linnaeus. The flowers resembled helmets from battle, leading him to select *Tropaeolum* as the genus name due to the Greek custom of hanging the foe's armour and weapons on a trophy pole. The Greek word "tropaion" is the source of the English word "trophy".
- Grows easily from seed in warmed, well-drained, average soil. Too much nitrogen fertilizer will cause the plants to produce more leaves than flowers.
- Compact, trailing and vining varieties are available. Use in hanging baskets, containers, borders, on trellises, cascading over stone walls and anywhere a bright spot of summer color is needed.
- Historic medicinal uses include treatments for respiratory infections, prevention of scurvy and external preparations for baldness and skin eruptions.
- Nasturtiums were planted in Thomas Jefferson's vegetable gardens at Monticello from 1774 on. They were also known to have been planted in Monet's gardens of Giverny and were popular in Victorian bouquets.

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America, Inc. not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.