

Did You Know?



Mustard, *Brassica* spp.

- Mustard can be grown for edible greens or for the seeds which are used whole, crushed or powdered in sauces, condiments, salad dressings.
- The Brassicaceae (formerly Cruciferae) family includes mustard as well as broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussel sprouts and cabbage.
- There are several species that are all considered mustard: *B. juncea* – brown and Indian mustard; *B. nigra* – black mustard, the spiciest or most pungent in flavor; *Sinapis alba* – yellow mustard, the most mild flavor.
- Since black mustard must be hand harvested, it is not grown commercially.
- Favorite mustards like Dijon, yellow, spicy brown, and even the hot mustard found in Chinese restaurants, all come from *B. juncea*.
- The French are the largest consumers of mustard with an average of 1.5 lbs./person/year.
- The use of mustard as a flavoring and medicine dates to 3000 BCE and is mentioned in Sumerian and Sanskrit writings of the time.
- Hippocrates as well as other ancient physicians used mustard medicinally.
- *Herbal*, published in 1597 by herbalist John Gerard, recommends mustard to aid digestion, warm the stomach and stimulate the appetite.
- Over time, medicinal uses have included treating circulation, heart and lung problems, fevers, flu, rheumatism and toothaches. A plaster made to cover the chest to facilitate breathing was very common.
- Mustard seeds contain antioxidants and glucosinolates (which are also found in cruciferous vegetables) which are the source of research into the health benefits and protections against diseases.
- The Romans made possibly the first mustard by combining fermented grape juice with mustard seeds, oil and honey to form a spreadable paste.

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- Cultures around the world use mustard as both prepared spreads and in seed form in cuisines of their regions.
- It is the enzyme myrosin that is released from the mustard seed when bruised or crushed and mixed with liquid that gives mustard its heat.
- Young leaves of the mustard plant are popular to grow as greens. Newer introductions *B. juncea* include: 'Mizuna Red Kingdom F1', 'Tatsoi Black Knight' and 'Garnet Red'. Descriptions and photos can be found on the National Garden Bureau website.

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