

The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

Nasturtiums



Most people don't give nasturtiums a second look. They're sometimes regarded as weeds as they reseed easily and will grow absolutely anywhere with the least amount of maintenance.

They are often seen as ornamental annuals, blooming through early summer before the heat turns them into a scraggly mess of vines.

However, historically, nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) are considered vegetables, hailing from South America originally cultivated in Peru from where some of our best-known foods tomatoes and potatoes originate. The leaves and flowers contain high amounts of mustard oils which give them a pungent, peppery flavour and are released when the plant is crushed or chewed. The same oils are found in mustard seeds, horseradish root, and wasabi.

Mustard oils have active antibiotic, antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial properties making nasturtiums a natural remedy for everything from skin infections to sinus colds. The leaves are also rich in vitamin C and iron, and anthocyanins in the red and orange flowers make them highly antioxidant. Just make a simple salad with the leaves and flowers to gain the many health benefits of this much underrated plant.



Nasturtium can be seen growing everywhere. There is nothing better than taking a quick snack of a few Nasturtium flowers or leaves which can be easily utilised in most dishes.

The mustard oils in the plant add a spicy kick to most recipes.

You can add walnuts and Parmesan to

make it extra nutty and cheesy. Add the leaves, flowers, garlic, olive oil, walnuts, and Parmesan to a blender or food processor using four cups of packed nasturtium leaves, two cups of packed nasturtium flowers, one and a half cups of olive oil, five cloves of garlic, one



to one and a half cups of walnuts and one to one and a half cups of shredded Parmesan cheese.

Blend all the ingredients until the mixture is smooth and ladle the pesto into small jars. It should keep for up to two weeks if refrigerated.