



NASTURTIUM (TROPAEOLUM MAJUS)

Nasturtium belongs to the Brassicaceae family; it is a sprawling succulent perennial in warmer areas, and an annual, in frosty places. It originates in South America and is known for its fiery colourful flowers with bright green peltate (shield like) leaves and its 3 celled capsular fruit.

They do well on a light sandy soil and are a companion plant for fruit trees. Nasturtiums with sufficient water grow and flower prolifically; however with too much water they put on masses of leaves. Their bright yellow flowers are attractive to many insects.

White butterfly love this family, so why not use nasturtiums to act as a decoy and then sprinkle wormwood over the cabbages etc.!

USES

Nasturtium leaves have a peppery taste and all parts of the plant are edible, the seeds can be used as a caper substitute. Sometimes called 'Indian cress'; its spicy leaves make a great addition to salads and sandwiches or it can be chopped with parsley, or chives and added to cottage cheese. The flowers have a delicate perfume and make lovely cut flowers in a vase, or as edible colour decorations on salads.

MEDICINAL VALUES

Nasturtiums are rich in sulphur, iodine, potassium, Vitamin C and phosphate.

A plant with powerful anti-microbial properties, make it useful against bacterial infections especially respiratory, such as bronchitis. Being high in sulphur nasturtiums are useful in cases of 'flu, common cold and even infections of the female genital tract. Nasturtiums together with nettles are useful for stimulating hair growth and scalp health. Use as a strong tea and pour over after final rinse.

In Germany, one company has made a herbal antibiotic and heart remedy of nasturtium. The seed contains a type of mustard oil which can be used to treat staphylococcus, streptococcus and salmonella infections. It can be taken as powdered seeds or fresh juice. Leaf tea can assist excess catarrh.

Just eating the leaves and flowers on a regular basis strengthens the whole system: the old saying "bitter in the mouth, builds a healthy heart."

Notes prepared by Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame with acknowledgement of Pat Collins, Useful Weeds at Your Doorstep, Total Health and Education Centre, Muswellbrook, NSW. ISBN 0-646-36468-5

