



Anise Hyssop

Agastache foeniculum

This herb belongs to the Lamiaceae or mint family and is indigenous to northern and central areas of North America.

Identification & Cultivation: Anise hyssop is a hardy perennial growing to 90cm and is attractive and aromatic; its fragrance is a blend of mint and anise/licuorice, with a sweet aniseed flavour. It has square stems, the leaves are opposite and cordate-shaped with dainty scalloped margins and lots of delicate white, felt-like hairs on their undersides. During spring, the new growth often has an attractive purple hue. The flowers are very eye-catching; tall, elongated lavender-coloured flower spikes, which are most beloved by bees.

Primarily, anise hyssop is propagated by seed (sow early spring), though a clump may be divided in winter. It prefers to grow in a drained, fertile soil, preferring full sun, but it can tolerate partial shade. Cut it back by a third after flowering and this will encourage it to get bushier and stimulate it to reflower. It can self-seed, and roots can travel underground, but it's not too aggressive.



(Image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agastache_foeniculum)

Parts used: Leaves and flowers.

Medicinal uses: Use the leaves in a tea to stimulate the digestive system; it is a warming digestive aid, it is carminative (relieves flatulence) and eases diarrhoea. It is anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory, making it useful for relieving congestion, coughs and colds. It is sedating and effective for relieving pains in the chest, i.e. aching from excessive coughing, soothing, expectorant and suppressant for coughs (in combination with licuorice). It is effective for treating lung conditions such as bronchitis and respiratory tract infections. For fevers, it is diaphoretic; inducing perspiration. Used as a preventative or treatment for heat stroke and summer colds. The tea is slightly sedating or tranquilising. Used in tinctures for colds, sore throats, flu and respiratory problems.



(Image: <https://www.kingsseeds.co.nz/site/kingseeds/images/large/4530.jpg>)

External Uses: A poultice of leaves and stems may be used to help heal burn injuries and wounds, and as a wash to reduce itching from poison ivy. Leaves can be applied topically as a compress for burns, fever, headache, heatstroke and herpes. Excellent in the bath or foot bath: simply for cooling off, treating sunburn, fungal infections, e.g. athlete's foot, yeast overgrowth. In salves and balms, it is used for wound healing. Native Americans included it in their medicine bundles burning it as incense for protection. Its uplifting fragrance was used to treat depression.

Cough Drops

Make the syrup below. Use sugar not honey for the cough drops (you can use raw sugar or brown sugar instead of white).

Instead of pouring your syrup into a bottle, keep boiling it – every minute or so drop a bit into cold water. When it forms a hard ball in the cold water, take the syrup off the heat immediately and pour into a buttered flat dish. Cool and cut into small squares. Dust with icing sugar to prevent from sticking. Store in an airtight container in a cool place.

Flower essence: Good for the heart, including a “feeble heart”, and is said to bring the sweetness after the weight of guilt and shame. Also used for body/soul integration of pain and suffering. Use as a post-trauma stabiliser aiding the ability to forgive and to accept forgiveness.

Culinary uses: Add fresh leaves and flowers to both savoury and fruit salads; for flavour or as a garnish. Use fresh or dried with chicken, lamb or salmon or with some vegetable dishes, e.g. peas. The leaves can act as a substitute for mint in recipes. The flowers can be used in baking (try adding 1-2 tablespoons of fresh minced flowers to biscuit dough or tea breads, or experiment to suit your taste). Add the leaves to cool, refreshing drinks. Use to sweeten apples in a pie or stewed fruit. Steep leaves in milk – can be used for making ice cream.

Anise Hyssop Syrup Recipe

20 leaves – 1 handful of anise hyssop

1 cup sugar

1 cup water

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan over high heat and bring to the boil.

Remove from the heat and let steep for 30 minutes. Strain and refrigerate.

Other Uses: Potpourri – add the dried flowers to arrangements or to potpourri; the flowers retain their colour and scent on drying. Dries navy blue.

References:

How Can I Use Herbs In My Daily Life – by Isobel Shipard

www.herbs2000.com

www.susanweed.com/herbal_ezine/August11/nourish-yourself.htm

<https://backyardpatch.blogspot.com/2013/08/anise-hyssop-herb-of-the-week.html>

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Advisory Note: This text is given as a general guidance. If any adverse reactions occur or symptoms persist, please contact a qualified medical herbalist or medical doctor immediately.