



Chervil

Anthriscus cerefolium



Family Apiaceae

Description Annual to biennial, 20 – 40cm high, and very delicate, ferny leaves. Flowers are small umbels of tiny white flowers. The name Chervil comes from the Greek word meaning *leaf of rejoicing or cheer leaf*.

Seed sown early spring will give fast growth and plenty of foliage for picking before the hottest part of summer. The plant dislikes extreme heat and can bolt to seed quickly in summer, particularly if the soil is dry. To extend the life of this annual, nip out the flowers as soon as they develop. In subtropical and tropical climates, chervil will grow well in the winter. Chervil will flourish in a shady spot and likes plenty of water. The plants are very attractive and look wonderful as potted plants on a balcony or veranda.

Constituents Essential oil, flavonoid containing sulphuretin
Vitamins: A, C
Minerals: iron, potassium, magnesium
Actions: carminative, expectorant, diuretic, stomachic, tonic, aromatic, appetiser, stimulant, antibiotic, disinfectant

Medicinal Uses Chervil has been esteemed in Europe for various eye disorders including inflammation, cataracts, conjunctivitis, glaucoma and detached retina. Use 1 heaped teaspoon of freshly cut chervil to 1 cup of boiling water, cool to body temperature, strain and apply with cotton wool on an eye bath. Some herbalists also add the same amount of parsley, lavender flowers and eyebright, using 1 heaped teaspoon of the mixture of four herbs to one cup of boiling water. During the Middle Ages, chervil was used to ward off the plague. In addition to being prescribed as a diuretic to clear the kidneys, chervil has been used for anemia, colic, gout, haemorrhoids, purifying the blood and for rheumatic and liver complaints. Chervil's very gentle anticoagulant action can help relieve thrombosis, hardening of arteries, varicose veins and blood clots. Chervil was valued as a herb for glandular illnesses, congested chests and lungs, to lower high blood pressure, aid digestion, bring out perspiration and spring clean the body.

Chervil is a practical herb for senior citizens to eat or use as a tea, as folklore says it *cheers the spirit, clears depression and increases strength and well being*. An immune building herbal tonic is made by infusing ½ teaspoon of chopped chervil, vervain, and red clover in 1 cup of boiling water. Drink ½ cup in the morning, and again at night. Using chervil as a tea or eating leaves daily, has been valued to stimulate the brain and metabolism. Early Romans claimed chervil *increased the power of the memory*. Many students drink chervil before exams to assist their studying and enhance clarity.

For a cosmetic skin cleanser, infuse 1 tablespoon of chopped chervil in ½ cup of boiling water. Stir. Steep a few minutes and apply with

cotton wool. This facial beauty treatment was valued to delay the onset of wrinkles. Drinking a chervil tea regularly helps purify the blood and promote a clear and healthy complexion. Apply a poultice of chervil leaves to clear abscesses and boils, or bring relief to bruised and aching joints. Use chervil tea as a wash for eczema.

Culinary Uses Chervil leaves are aromatic with a mild aniseed-parsley smell and flavour. Always pick the outside leaves of the plant and leave the new younger inside leaves to develop. Chervil has an affinity with beans, peas, asparagus, soups, egg dishes, omelettes, herb butter, mayonnaise, salads, mashed potatoes, potato salad, tomatoes, spinach and root vegetables. The ferny foliage looks great as a garnish. Chervil is one of the Fines Herbes (a traditional mixture of chervil, parsley, chives and tarragon, which features in mornays and meat dishes), important in French recipes. Always add chervil near the end of cooking to avoid flavour loss. Chervil in small quantities enhances the flavour of other herbs.

Recipes

Potato Soup with Herbs

Dice and cook 4 medium potatoes until tender. Puree in a blender or mash. In a saucepan, melt 1 tablespoon of butter, add 2 medium chopped onions and brown. Stir in pureed potato. Add 2 tablespoons chopped garlic chives, 1 tablespoon chopped chervil, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, , pinch pepper and paprika, 2 pinches of salt, 4 cups chicken stock. Simmer 5 – 10 minutes. Serve soup with a sprig of chervil to garnish.

Cream of Chervil Soup

Brown 2 cloves of garlic in 2 tablespoons oil. Add chopped vegetables, a handful of chervil, 2 carrots, 2 celery sticks, 2 leeks, knob ginger, and brown well. Add 5 cups water, cover and simmer 30 minutes. Roast 3 tablespoons wholemeal flour until it begins to turn brown. Mix to paste with 1 cup of cold water. Pour into soup and simmer 10 minutes.

Chervil with Avocado

Peel and cut an avocado into 2cm dices. Marinate in lemon juice, season with salt and pepper. Toss through 2 – 3 sprigs chervil, chopped coarsely.

Chervil Paste

Beat 2 eggs, add 1 tablespoon milk and 1 teaspoon salt; cook in a pan until a thick creamy consistency. Add 1 heaped tablespoon very finely chopped chervil. Cool and serve with crackers, toasted bread or celery sticks.

References

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