

## Perilla: ancient medicine

*Perilla frutescens*

Perilla, Shiso, Wild basil, Wild red basil, Chinese basil,  
Purple mint, Rattlesnake weed, Summer coleus



There are many scientifically proven medicinal uses for Perilla herb. It is a pungent, aromatic, warming herb. An infusion of the plant is useful in the treatment of asthma, colds, cough and lung afflictions, influenza prevention, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, constipation, food poisoning and allergic reactions (especially from seafood), and to restore health and balance. The stems are a traditional Chinese remedy for morning sickness and restless fetus in pregnancy, though some say the herb should be avoided by pregnant women.

Perilla has been used for centuries in Oriental medicine as an anti-asthmatic, anti-bacterial, antidote, antimicrobial, anti-pyretic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antitussive, aromatic, carminative, diaphoretic, emollient, expectorant, pectoral, restorative, stomachic and tonic. The plant constituents confirm these uses in alternative medicine and ongoing studies have revealed that this plant is useful in curing many cancers as well as various other diseases and disorders.

### Perilla Tea Recipe

To 1 cup fresh herbs add 4 cups of boiling water, allow to steep 3 minutes.

Add sweetener to taste.

## Perilla Herb Constituents

Research has isolated such constituents as apigenin, Ascorbic-acid, beta-carotene, caffeic-acid, citral, dillapiol, elemicin, limonene, luteolin, myristicin, perillaldehyde, protocatechuic-acid, quercetin, rosmarinic-acid, and more, too numerous to mention.

Perilla smells funny, which is no wonder since you will usually find it in cow pastures. Rub leaves on your skin and clothes on hikes to repel ticks. Also a good companion plant for tomatoes. Harvest before seeds form, very invasive if allowed to seed.

## Perilla Edible Uses

Perilla is edible and medicinal. The leaves have a very pleasant sweet taste and are used as a spice, cooked as potherbs or fried, and combined with fish, rice, vegetables and soups. It is also chopped and combined with ginger root, then added to stir-fries, tempuras and salads in many Asian countries. The plant also supplies a nutritious cooking oil from the seed, as well as giving color and flavor to many pickled dishes. In the United States the essential oil of the plant is used as a food flavoring in candies and sauces. It is used as a flavoring in dental products and at one

time, it was one of the main ingredients in sarsaparilla. The entire plant is very nutritious, packed with vitamins and minerals, and one of the aldehyde isomers found in Perilla is 2,000 times as sweet as sugar.

## Other Uses for Perilla Plant

Perilla seed oil has been used in paints, varnishes, linoleum, printing ink, lacquers, and for protective waterproof coatings on cloth. Volatile oils of the plant are also used in aromatherapy and for perfume. The seed heads can be collected and dried for use in arrangements, potpourris and wreaths. The crushed plant also makes an effective insecticide.

## Perilla History and Folklore

In Asia, centuries ago, ceremonies were conducted before harvesting the plant, it was considered to be alive and was held as sacred, sent by God as food and medicine to treat all ailments of man. Disrespect for the plant meant death, anyone caught stepping on the plant would himself be trampled to death!

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