



Tulsi- Elixir of life

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The *Tulsi* plant, *Ocimum sanctum* is a member of the mint family closely related to culinary basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), but it is differentiated by its medicinal properties and some physical characteristics. These aromatic plants are native to Indian subcontinent and cultivated throughout Southeast Asian tropics. Basil most popularly known as *Tulsi* has been used for thousands of years in Ayurveda the plant is a sacred plant for Hindus and worshipped as the avatar of Lakshmi. In India, *Tulsi* has been adopted into spiritual rituals and lifestyle practices that provide a vast array of health benefits that are just beginning to be confirmed by modern science. *Tulsi* is recommended as a treatment for a range of conditions including anxiety, cough, asthma, diarrhea, fever, dysentery, arthritis, eye diseases, otalgia, indigestion, hiccups, vomiting, gastric, cardiac and genitourinary disorders, back pain, skin diseases, ringworm, insect, snake and scorpion bites and malaria and have diverse healing properties.

Types of *Tulsi*: There are three main types of *Tulsi* plants:
- *Rama Tulsi/ Green leaf Tulsi*: A green *Tulsi* with light purple flowers and an aromatic, clovelike scent (thanks to its chemical component of eugenol, which is the main aroma in cloves) and mellower flavour.

- *Krishna Tulsi/Shyama Tulsi/Purple leaf Tulsi*: A purple plant with a clovelike aroma and peppery flavour.

- *Vana Tulsi /Wild leaf Tulsi* : A bright, light green *Tulsi* plant that grows wild and is indigenous to many areas of Asia; it has a more lemony aroma and flavour.

Cultivation methods:

Soil condition: Sacred basil thrives well on a wide range of soils. Rich loam, poor laterite, saline and alkaline to moderately acidic soils are also well suited for its cultivation. Well drained soil helps in better vegetative growth.



Climate: It flourishes well under fairly high rainfall and humid conditions. Long days and high temperatures have been found favourable for plant growth and oil production. The plant is moderately tolerant to drought and frost. The plant can be grown under partially shaded conditions but with low oil contents.

Propagation: *Tulsi* is propagated through seeds. Seeds will get deteriorated over generations, due to its high cross-pollination. Fresh planting have done by growers to take fresh seeds from the pedigree stock.

Planting time: The nursery will be prepared the third week of February and transplanting is done in the mid of April.

Harvesting: The crop harvested at full bloom stage to get maximum essential oil yield and better quality of oil. The first harvest is 90-95 days of planting and next harvesting at

every 65-75 days of interval. Harvesting should be done usually on bright sunny days for high and good quality oil. The crop should be cut at 15-20 cm above the ground level.

Processing: The harvested produce may be allowed to wilt in the field itself for 4-5 hours so as to reduce the moisture and bulkiness. However, oil quality and yield do not lack before 6-8 hours after harvest. Steam distillation is found to be superior to hydro distillation and hydro cum steam distillation. Distillation unit should be clean, rust free and free of any other odour. The distilled oil is treated with anhydrous sodium sulphate or common salt at the rate of 20 g per litre to remove the moisture. The oil should be stored in sealed amber coloured glass bottles or containers made of stainless steel and stored in a cool and dry place.

Expected yield: Crop yield about 8 to 10 tones of fresh herbage per acre can be obtained by 2-3 harvests in a

year. The oil yield varies from type of varieties, season and place of origin. Range of oil recovery are 0.3 – 0.4 per cent.

Health benefits of *Tulsi*: Due to the uncountable health benefits *Tulsi* has, it is considered as the 'Golden remedy of Ayurveda'. A *Tulsi* plant is present in every Indian household as worship the plant and use it for medicinal purpose are-

Healing power: The basil or *Tulsi* plant has many medicinal properties. The leaves strengthen the stomach and help in respiratory diseases.

Kidney stone: Basil has strengthening effect on the kidney. In case of stone, regularly taking a mixture of basil leaves juice and honey for 6 months helps expel the

stones via the urinary tract.

Stress: Basil leaves are regarded as anti-stress agents. Recent studies have shown that the leaves afford significant protection against stress. Even healthy persons can chew 12 leaves of basil, twice a day, to prevent stress. It purifies blood and helps prevent several common elements.

Headaches: Basil makes a good medicine for headache.

Aids in digestion: It work as appetizer and promotes digestion by helping in secretion of digestive enzymes.

For curing diabetes: Keep *Tulsi* root powder in water overnight and take it early morning. The medicinal property of the plant helps.

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