

Ginger is the Herb of the Year 2023

Ginger, *Zingiber officinal* is the International Herb of the year for 2023. Ginger is one of the oldest known spices. It has a peppery and sweet taste with a spicy tang and the smell of lemony citrus. It belongs to the *Zingiberaceae* family,



and it's closely related to turmeric, cardamom, and galangal. The rhizome (underground part of the stem) is the part commonly used as a spice. It's often called ginger root or, simply, ginger. The plant grows from a tuberous rhizome and it is this rhizome that is used medicinally and as a culinary herb. It is native to humid, tropical forests in Southeast Asia and thrives in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 9 to 12. The rhizomes are brown to golden colored with thin, papery outer skin. The inside is a pale yellow and has a spicy scent. It grows 3 to 4 feet tall on a straight stem and has a 2-to-3-foot spread. The alternating leaves along the stem are tapered in shape and 6 to 12 inches long. It can flower in the fall on 1-foot-tall stems with yellow and purple flowers, and capsules hold small black seeds. The rhizomes grow underground horizontally, sending up sprouts and making new rhizomes. Plants can be started from rhizomes purchased at a grocery store. When planted indoors, in March and transplanted after the last frost date outdoors it can be grown in temperate climates but will need to be potted up and brought in before any danger of frost. Plant in loose, well drained soil in a sunny to slightly shaded location.

Ginger can be used fresh, dried, powdered, or as an oil or juice and is a common ingredient in many recipes. It can be found in processed foods and cosmetics. It's been used to aid digestion, reduce nausea, and help fight the flu and common cold, to name a few of its purposes. The unique fragrance and flavor of ginger come from its natural oils, the most important of which is gingerol. Gingerol is the main bioactive compound in ginger. It's responsible for much of ginger's medicinal properties. Gingerol has powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, according to research. For instance, it may help reduce oxidative stress which is the result of having an excess number of free radicals in the body.

Ginger appears to be highly effective against nausea. It may help relieve nausea and vomiting for people undergoing certain types of surgery. Ginger may also help chemotherapy related nausea, but larger human studies are needed.

However, it may be the most effective when it comes to pregnancy-related nausea, such as morning sickness. Although ginger is considered safe, talk with your doctor before taking large amounts if you're pregnant. It's recommended that pregnant women who are close to labor or who've had miscarriages avoid ginger. Ginger is contraindicated with a history of vaginal bleeding and clotting disorders as well.

Ginger has a history of use for chronic indigestion which is characterized by recurrent pain and discomfort in the upper part of the stomach. It is believed the relief is due to ginger increasing the rate that the stomach is emptying.

There's some evidence, in both humans and animals, that ginger can lead to significant reductions in LDL (bad) cholesterol, total cholesterol, and blood triglyceride levels.

Ginger may help fight harmful bacteria and viruses, which could reduce your risk for infections. Ginger is loaded with nutrients and bioactive compounds that have powerful benefits for your body and brain. It's one of the very few superfoods actually worthy of that term.

My favorite way to make a ginger tea is one I drink almost daily in the cooler seasons.

In a cup put:

One slice of fresh Ginger

One slice of fresh lemon

One stick of cinnamon

Optional additions: rosehips, orange peel

Pour hot water in your cup and sweeten as desired. I use a little honey.

I sip on this tea all day adding hot water and additional sweetener as needed to the cup.

