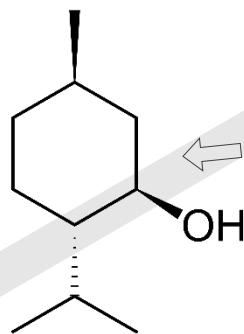




Plant of the Month

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Menthol is the main active ingredient in peppermint, making up 33-55% of the oil



Microscopy

The upper epidermal cells of peppermint leaves have sinuous walls, meaning they have a wavy outline. Shown above is a trichome fixed to the upper epidermis that secretes oil. If you look closely, you can see that the trichome head is made up of eight cells. This characteristic of peppermint is used to distinguish it from spearmint, which has twelve-celled glandular trichomes.

History/Traditional Use

Peppermint is referenced in ancient texts and is thought to have originated in northern Africa and the Mediterranean. Egyptian medical records from 1550 BC list peppermint as a cure for stomach illness. Roman philosophers like Hippocrates believed the herbs discouraged sexual impulses. Later, it was spread through North America after European settlers brought it over. Today, peppermint oil is commonly used as an herbal remedy to treat gastrointestinal disorders like IBS.



Peppermint

Mentha piperita



Pharmacology

The menthol found in peppermint oil has relaxing properties on the smooth muscle in the digestive tract. There has been extensive research showing the oil's effectiveness in reducing abdominal pain from irritable bowel syndrome. Traditionally, peppermint has been used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, colds and headaches. It is also used widely as a breath freshener in toothpaste, mints, and gum

Botany/Preparation

Peppermint is believed to be a naturally occurring hybrid of spearmint and water mint. It wasn't classified as its own species until the turn of the 17th century. The leaves can be dried and used to make tea, capsules or extracts. The oil from the leaves can be applied topically or taken in capsules.



References

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