



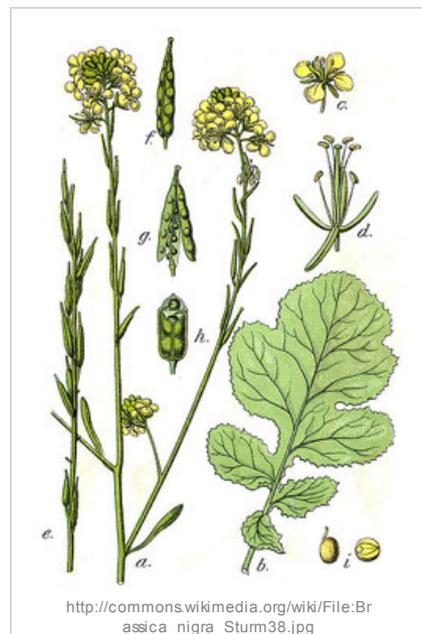
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## Brassica nigra - (L.)W.D.J.Koch.

<b>Common Name</b>	Black Mustard
<b>Family</b>	<b>Brassicaceae or Cruciferae</b>
<b>Synonyms</b>	Sinapis nigra. Sisymbrium nigrum. Brassica brachycarpa. Brassica sinapioides.
<b>Known Hazards</b>	When eaten in large quantities, the seed and pods have sometimes proved toxic to grazing animals[85]. Mustard allergy possibly especially in children and adolescents. Retention of seeds possibly in intestines if taken internally [301].
<b>Habitats</b>	Cliffs near the sea in S. W. England[17].
<b>Range</b>	C. Europe. Occasionally naturalized in S.W. Britain[17].
<b>Edibility Rating</b>	
<b>Medicinal Rating</b>	
<b>Care</b>	



### Summary

### Physical Characteristics



Brassica nigra is a ANNUAL growing to 1.2 m (4ft) by 0.6 m (2ft in). It is hardy to zone 7 and is not frost tender. It is in flower from Jun to August, and the seeds ripen from Jul to September. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Bees, flies. The plant is self-fertile.



USDA hardiness zone : Coming soon

Suitable for: light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils and can grow in very acid soils.

It can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade. It prefers moist soil. The plant can tolerate maritime exposure.

### Habitats

Cultivated Beds;

### Edible Uses

Edible Parts: [Leaves](#); [Oil](#); [Oil](#); [Seed](#); [Stem](#).

Edible Uses: [Oil](#); [Oil](#).

Leaves - raw or cooked[2, 85, 100]. A hot flavour, they can be finely chopped and added to salads or cooked as a potherb[183]. The seedlings can also be used as a salading when about one week old, adding a hot pungency to a salad[2, 27, 183, K]. Immature flowering stems - cooked and eaten like broccoli[183]. Mustard seed is commonly ground into a powder and used as a food flavouring and relish[4, 5, 17, 27, 34]. This is the black mustard of commerce, it is widely used as a food relish and as an ingredient of curry[183]. Pungency of mustard develops when cold water is added to the ground-up seed - an enzyme (myrosin) acts on a glycoside (sinigrin) to produce a sulphur compound. The reaction takes 10 - 15 minutes. Mixing with hot water or vinegar, or adding salt, inhibits the enzyme and produces a mild bitter mustard[238]. The seed can also be used whole to season pickles, curries, sauerkraut etc[183, 238]. Black mustard has a stronger more pungent flavour than white mustard (Sinapis alba) and brown mustard (B. juncea)[238]. An edible oil is obtained from the seed[2, 21, 171].

### Medicinal Uses

*Plants For A Future can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before using a plant medicinally.*

[Antirheumatic](#); [Appetizer](#); [Digestive](#); [Diuretic](#); [Emetic](#); [Rubefacient](#); [Stimulant](#).

Mustard seed is often used in herbal medicine, especially as a rubefacient poultice[4]. The seed is ground and made into a paste then applied to the skin[4, 21, 46, 213] in the treatment of rheumatism, as a means of reducing congestion in internal organs[4, 222]. Applied externally, mustard relieves congestion by drawing the blood to the surface as in head affections, neuralgia and spasms. Hot water poured on bruised seeds makes a stimulant foot bath, good for colds and headaches. Old herbals suggested mustard for treating alopecia, epilepsy, snakebite, and toothache[269]. Care must be taken not to overdo it, since poultices can sometimes cause quite severe irritation to the skin[K]. The seed is also used internally, when it is appetizer, digestive, diuretic, emetic and tonic[4, 21, 46]. Swallowed whole when mixed with molasses, it acts as a laxative[213]. A decoction of the seeds is used in the treatment of indurations of the liver and spleen. It is also used to treat carcinoma, throat tumours, and imposthumes[269]. A liquid prepared from the seed, when gargled, is said to help tumours of the "sinax"[269]. The seed is eaten as a tonic and appetite stimulant[4, 21, 46, 222]. Hot water poured onto bruised mustard seeds makes a stimulating foot bath and can also be used as an inhaler where it acts to throw off a cold or dispel a headache[4]. Mustard Oil is said to stimulate hair growth. Mustard is also recommended as an aperient ingredient of tea, useful in hiccup. Mustard flour is considered antiseptic[269].

### Other Uses

[Green manure](#); [Oil](#); [Oil](#); [Repellent](#).

A semi-drying oil is obtained from the seed, as well as being edible it is also used as a lubricant, illuminant and in making soap[17, 21, 46, 100]. The plant is often grown as a green manure, it is very fast, producing a bulk suitable for digging into the soil in about 8 weeks[100]. Not very winter hardy, it is generally used in spring and summer. It does harbour the pests and diseases of the cabbage family so is probably best avoided where these plants are grown in a short rotation and especially if club root is a problem. Mustard oil (allyl isothiocyanate) is used in commercial cat and dog repellent mixtures[269].

### Cultivation details

An easily grown plant, black mustard is suited to many types of soils except very heavy clays, it grows best on light sandy loams, or deep rich fertile soils[269]. Succeeds in full sun in a well-drained fertile preferably alkaline soil[200]. Prefers a heavy soil in an open position[16]. Another report says that it prefers a light well-drained soil and some shade in the summer[52]. The plant tolerates an annual precipitation of 30 to 170cm, an annual average temperature range of 6 to 27°C and a pH in the range of 4.9 to 8.2[269]. Black mustard is adapted to a wide variety of climatic conditions, it is often grown in the temperate zone though it is mainly suited to tropical areas, and grown chiefly as a rainfed crop in areas of low or moderate rainfall[269]. Black mustard is often cultivated for its edible seed, though it is going out of favour because it rapidly sheds its seeds once they are ripe and this makes it harder to harvest mechanically than the less pungent brown mustard (Brassica juncea).. This is used especially as a food flavouring, though it is also sown with the seeds of garden cress (Lepidium sativum) to provide mustard and cress, a salading eaten when the seedlings are about one week old. Black mustard is also grown as a medicinal plant. It germinates freely and quickly grows rapidly and makes a very useful green manure. The plants are not very winter hardy so the seed is best sown in the spring when grown for its seed whilst it can be sown as late as late summer as a green manure crop. The flowers have a pleasing perfume, though this is only noticed if several flowers are inhaled at the same time[245].

### Propagation

Seed - sow in situ from early spring until late summer in order to obtain a succession of crops. The main crop for seed is sown in April.

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### Expert comment

### Author

(L.)W.D.J.Koch.

### Botanical References

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### Links / References

[K] **Ken Fern** Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[2]**Hedrick. U. P.** Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World.

Lots of entries, quite a lot of information in most entries and references.

[4]**Grieve.** A Modern Herbal.

Not so modern (1930's?) but lots of information, mainly temperate plants.

[5]**Mabey. R.** Food for Free.

Edible wild plants found in Britain. Fairly comprehensive, very few pictures and rather optimistic on the desirability of some of the plants.

[16]**Simons.** New Vegetable Growers Handbook.

A good guide to growing vegetables in temperate areas, not entirely organic.

[17]**Clapham, Tootin and Warburg.** Flora of the British Isles.

A very comprehensive flora, the standard reference book but it has no pictures.

[21]**Lust. J.** The Herb Book.

Lots of information tightly crammed into a fairly small book.

[27]**Vilmorin. A.** The Vegetable Garden.

A reprint of a nineteenth century classic, giving details of vegetable varieties. Not really that informative though.

[34]**Harrison. S. Wallis. M. Masfield. G.** The Oxford Book of Food Plants.

Good drawings of some of the more common food plants from around the world. Not much information though.

[46]**Uphof. J. C. Th.** Dictionary of Economic Plants.

An excellent and very comprehensive guide but it only gives very short descriptions of the uses without any details of how to utilize the plants. Not for the casual reader.

[52]**Larkcom. J.** Salads all the Year Round.

A good and comprehensive guide to temperate salad plants, with full organic details of cultivation.

[85]**Harrington. H. D.** Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains.

A superb book. Very readable, it gives the results of the authors experiments with native edible plants.

[100]**Polunin. O.** Flowers of Europe - A Field Guide.

An excellent and well illustrated pocket guide for those with very large pockets. Also gives some details on plant uses.

[171]**Hill. A. F.** Economic Botany.

Not very comprehensive, but it is quite readable and goes into some a bit of detail about the plants it does cover.

[183]**Facciola. S.** Cornucopia - A Source Book of Edible Plants.

Excellent. Contains a very wide range of conventional and unconventional food plants (including tropical) and where they can be obtained (mainly N. American nurseries but also research institutes and a lot of other nurseries from around the world.

[200]**Huxley. A.** The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening. 1992.

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[213]**Weiner. M. A.** Earth Medicine, Earth Food.

A nice book to read though it is difficult to look up individual plants since the book is divided into separate sections dealing with the different medicinal uses plus a section on edible plants. Common names are used instead of botanical.

[222]**Foster. S. & Duke. J. A.** A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants. Eastern and Central N. America.

A concise book dealing with almost 500 species. A line drawing of each plant is included plus colour photographs of about 100 species. Very good as a field guide, it only gives brief details about the plants medicinal properties.

[238]**Bown. D.** Encyclopaedia of Herbs and their Uses.

A very well presented and informative book on herbs from around the globe. Plenty in it for both the casual reader and the serious student. Just one main quibble is the silly way of having two separate entries for each plant.

[245]**Genders. R.** Scented Flora of the World.

An excellent, comprehensive book on scented plants giving a few other plant uses and brief cultivation details. There are no illustrations.

[269]**Duke. J.** Handbook of Energy Crops

Published only on the Internet, excellent information on a wide range of plants.

[301]**Karaliedde. L. and Gawarammana. I.** Traditional Herbal Medicines

A guide to the safer use of herbal medicines.

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