



## Herbal Garden (Muligai Vanam)



### Sweet Basil

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<b>Botanical Name</b>	:	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> L.
<b>Tamil Name</b>	:	Thiruneetru pachchilai
<b>Sanskrit Name</b>	:	Barbari
<b>English Name</b>	:	Sweet Basil

### Distribution and Habitat

*Ocimum basilicum* (L.) commonly known as Sweet basil is one of the most economically important aromatic herbs of the *Lamiaceae* family. It is considered to have originated in the warmer parts of the Indo-Malayan regions, is abundantly found in tropical and hotter parts of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. It is a medium size herb with strong scent and smooth or velvety touch. Leaves 3-5 cm long, toothed, opposite; simple; entire and ovate. Flowers 8-12 mm long in cluster-like circles of 6-10. The petals are white, pink or purplish. It grows in



habitats like wastelands and on hills and due to its ornamental and therapeutic significance it is also grown in houses.

### Parts used

Leaves, flowers, seeds and roots

### Phyto-chemical constituents

Volatile oils, saponins, coumarins, alkaloids, tannins, anthra-quinones, anthocyanins, flavonoides, diterpenoides, tri-terpenoides, pyredines, pyrolidines, polyphenols, irridoides, quinones and sugars.

## Uses

Leaves and flowers are used as flavouring or as spinach. Leaves are used in the preparation of tea. The seed can be eaten raw or added to bread dough as flavouring. When soaked in water the seeds become mucilaginous and can be made into a refreshing beverage. Fragrant oil of leaves and seeds are used in perfumes and toiletries.

## Medicinal uses

Sweet basil has been used for thousands of years as a culinary and medicinal herb. The leaves and flowering tops are antispasmodic, aromatic, carminative, digestive, and stomachic. They are taken internally in the treatment of feverish illnesses, poor digestion, nausea, abdominal cramps,



gastro-enteritis, migraine, insomnia, depression and exhaustion (Lemos et al., 2016). Externally, they are used to treat acne, loss of smell, insect stings, snake bites and skin infections. The mucilaginous seed is given in infusion in the treatment of gonorrhoea, dysentery and chronic diarrhoea (Saeidi et al., 2018). It is said to remove film and opacity from the eyes. The root is used in the treatment of bowel complaints in children and malarial fever. Extracts from the plant are bactericidal and are also effective against internal parasites and ear ache. Hot Basil tea is good for treating nausea, flatulence and dysentery. The essential oil is used in aromatherapy.

## Conclusion

*O. basilicum* (L.) is a common herb, grown in many households with a broad range of therapeutic properties. It would be a blessing in disguise if this herb becomes a medicine for the common man. Various plant parts such as leaves, seeds and roots are recommended for the common people as folk medicines. The plant has reputed medicinal uses such as antioxidant, antibacterial, antimicrobial, antifungal, antiviral, cyto-protective, anticonvulsant, hypoglycaemic, hypo-lipidemic, hepato-protective, reno-protective, neuro-protective, spermicidal, dermatologic and insecticidal agent.

