

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

By Beverly Wickersham

Mexican Mint Marigold, A Sweet Herb

Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), also known as Texas Tarragon, Spanish Tarragon, Mexican Tarragon, Sweet Mace, Yerba Anise, and Sweet Marigold is an attractive, tough, perennial culinary herb that doubles as a showy ornamental. This member of the Asteraceae or Sunflower family is not a mint at all, but its chopped leaves are often used as a flavoring in green salads. Adding leaves late in the cooking process adds additional flavoring to fish and chicken. It also makes an anise-flavored tea, and its leaves and flowers are frequently added to potpourris.

This Marigold is best planted in full sun but can tolerate, even welcome, partial afternoon shade. It readily reseeds in the late fall. Semi hard cuttings are easy to propagate in the fall or early spring. Mexican Mint Marigold dies to the ground in winter. Therefore, cut the branches back several inches from the ground after the first hard freeze. Adding mulch to partially cover the remaining stems will protect the roots from severe cold and will also deter weeds. Look for new growth in the spring. The plant will grow to a height of 18 to 36 inches. Space new plants approximately 10 to 18 inches apart. It can almost be considered a bush, unlike regular marigolds.

This profusely blooming plant is a beautiful ornamental specimen plant. It also is suitable for a border plant or for foundation planting when interspersed with low-growing plants for contrast. Mexican Mint Marigold is a showy container plant, especially when surrounded by trailing herbs such as the Rosemary cultivar "Prostratus" or other complimentary trailing flowering plants.

This versatile plant is not prone to disease or insect problems. If spider mites do attack it in dry, hot weather, simply blast them away with an upward strong spray of water. One of the benefits of the Mexican Mint Marigold plant is the marvelous scent given off when brushing against it in the garden. It will permeate the area with a fresh clean scent. Because of its strong scent, it is very deer resistant and a good planting for the deer prone gardens.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

