

Growing Chamomile

When I was planting my garden years ago, my sweet daughter opened up a whole packet of chamomile seeds and scattered them far and wide, while squealing, "Wheeeeeeeeeee". For those of you that know me, I am a geometric person, who likes things planted in rows, *straight* rows I had no idea where the seeds landed and after I got over the initial shock to my organized inner self, I delighted in the fact she was so carefree in her seed distribution.

As a result, this delicate flower from the daisy family is growing in numerous places, year after year.



Traditionally, chamomile has been used for centuries as an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, mild astringent and healing medicine. According to U.S. National Library of Medicine, chamomile is one of the most ancient medicinal herbs known to mankind.



It is a member of *Asteraceae/Compositae* family and represented by two common varieties ~ German Chamomile (*Chamomilla recutita*) and Roman Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*).

The dried flowers of chamomile contain many terpenoids and flavonoids contributing to its medicinal properties. Chamomile preparations are commonly used for many human ailments such as hay fever, inflammation, muscle spasms, menstrual disorders, insomnia, ulcers, wounds, gastrointestinal disorders, rheumatic pain, and hemorrhoids. Chamomile is often used to treat mild skin irritations, including sunburn, rashes, sores and even eye inflammations. Who knew? For more information on the benefits and uses of chamomile, click [here](#).

The chamomile garden patch is one of Sox's (our beagle) favorite spot. He smells SO good after romping around in the flower bed.



I decided to try making a tea this year using the fresh flowers vs. drying them. Unlike many other herbs, you want to collect the blossoms only, not the leaves, stems or roots. The best time to harvest is mid-morning, after the dew has evaporated but before the mid-day sun. Just pinch off the blossoms and shake off any dirt or insects.



As with most herbs, more quantity is needed when using fresh vs. dried. I used 3-4 tablespoons of flowers.



If you do not have a tea pot with a strainer, you can use

cheesecloth to bundle the herbs. You can also just strain the tea from the blossoms after you are finished steeping.

Add hot water and steep for 5 minutes. Fresh chamomile tea has a clean, fruity, apple undertone which is different from dried chamomile. The Greek derivative of chamomile means “earth apple”. Makes sense.



I did add one mint leaf...which seemed to enhance the chamomile flavor, not overwhelm it.



I rarely add sweetener to my tea, and this one, in my opinion, doesn't need anything!



After reading about all the benefits of this simple tea, I plan to drink it on a more consistent basis.



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Perhaps I will experiment with adding lavender....and concoct the perfect sleepy time tea!

Chamomile is extremely easy to grow. Roman chamomile is a perennial, growing from the same root year after year. German chamomile is an annual, but don't expect it to grow in

the garden for just one year! It self-sows freely and you can bet if you plant it one time, it will spring up in the garden from then on.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Mary