Mint is a minor crop in Yuma County with production ranging less than 10 acres. True with various Yuma crops grown in the region, mint is a specialty crop that is unavailable in many parts of the nation during the winter months.

In the international market, Japan was first to start commercial production of mint before the First World War. The mint planted in Japan was called as “Mentha Arvensis,” more commonly known as Japanese mint. During that time, Japan was the world leader in mint and menthol production.

Mint originated in Europe and the Mediterranean and its many varieties are now cultivated all over the world. Long been regarded as a symbol of hospitality, the Romans would strew it around at feasts and banquets as a welcoming sign to guests.

The word mint is derived from the Latin Mentha. The Romans flavored wines and sauces with mint.

There are about 30 species of mint and some say almost 500 varieties, including peppermint, spearmint, apple mint, orange mint, Spanish mint, pineapple mint, ginger mint, mackerel mint, lamb mint, horse mint, lemon mint, pennyroyal, water mint and chocolate mint.

The Romans and Greeks appreciated mint’s refreshing scent and used it to flavor cordials, condiments and fruit dishes. They also used it in baths and bedchambers for its clean, invigorating perfume.

The common garden mint is spearmint, not peppermint as most people assume. Mint is well thought of in Mexico, where it is known as yerba buena, the good herb.

Mint’s essential oils are used in perfume, cosmetics, air fresheners, drink flavorings, candies and medications.

Mint is said to be an effective mouse deterrent.

Mint is a member of the Lamiaceae family of plants. Lamiaceae is a family of flowering plants that comprises over 240 genera and 6,500 species worldwide. It is one of the 240 Genera and belongs specifically to the Mentha genus.

Most mint plants are hybridized perennials. The most popular hybrid mint plants are peppermint (Mentha piperita) and spearmint (Mentha spicata). Peppermint results from a cross between water mint (Mentha aquatica) and spearmint (Mentha spicata). Spearmint results from a cross between apple mint (Mentha suaveolens) and wild water mint (Mentha longifolia).

The essential oil of mint contains varying amounts of menthol, which has been shown to have antimicrobial activity. Traditionally, peppermint essential oil has been used to treat indigestion, headaches, colic, gingivitis, irritable bowel syndrome, spasms and rheumatism.

This volatile and potent essential oil has very diverse uses because of its many properties. It relaxes muscles; has antiviral and bactericidal qualities; increases stomach acidity (to aid di-
gestion); is an analgesic and counterirritant; and is a carminative (eases intestinal cramping).

All mints prefer, and thrive, in cool, moist spots in partial shade but, in general, mints tolerate a wide range of conditions, and can also be grown in full sun.

Mints are fast growing, extending their reach along surfaces through a network of runners. Due to their speedy growth, one plant of each desired mint, along with a little care, will provide more than enough mint for most home uses.

Some mint species are more invasive than other and care should be taken when mixing any mint with any other plants, or the mint will take over the planting space.

Some mints can be propagated by seed. But growth from seed can be an unreliable method for raising mint for two reasons: mint seeds are highly variable, one might not end up with what one presupposed was planted some mint varieties are sterile. It is more effective to take and plant cuttings from the runners of healthy mint plants.

The common mints, like spearmint and peppermint, are considered good to grow among tomato and pepper plants, where they enhance flavor, repel aphids, attract parasitic wasps to eat caterpillars, provide a "living mulch" ground cover.

Chamomile is thought to make a good companion plant for mint, as well as increasing essential oil in mints, making them "stronger" in scent and flavor.

Harvesting of mint leaves can be done at anytime. Fresh mint leaves should be used immediately or stored up to a couple of days in plastic bags within a refrigerator. Optionally, mint can be frozen in ice cube trays. Dried mint leaves should be stored in an airtight container placed in a cool, dark, dry area.

The leaf, fresh or dried, is the culinary source of mint. Fresh mint is usually preferred over dried mint when storage of the mint is not a problem. The leaves have a pleasant warm, fresh, aromatic, sweet flavor with a cool aftertaste. Mint leaves are used in teas, beverages, jellies, syrups, candies, and ice creams. In Middle Eastern cuisine mint is used on lamb dishes. In British cuisine, mint sauce is popular with lamb.

Mint is a necessary ingredient in Touareg tea, a popular tea in northern African and Arab countries.

Methyl salicylate, commonly called "oil of wintergreen", is often used as a mint flavoring for foods and candies due to its mint-like flavor.

Mint was originally used as a medicinal herb to treat stomach ache and chest pains. During the Middle Ages, powdered mint leaves were used to whiten teeth. Mint tea is a strong diuretic. Mint also aids digestion.

Menthol from mint essential oil (40-90%) is an ingredient of many cosmetics and some perfumes. Menthol and mint essential oil are also much used in medicine as a component of many drugs, and are very popular in aromatherapy.

Mint is also used in cigarettes as an additive, because it can block out the bitter taste of tobacco and soothes the throat.
Many people also believe the strong, sharp flavor and scent of mint can be used as a mild decongestant for illnesses such as the common cold.

In Rome, Pliny recommended that a wreath of mint was a good thing for students to wear since it was thought to "exhilarate their minds". Some modern research suggests that he was right.

Mint leaves are often used by many campers to repel mosquitoes. It is also said that extracts from mint leaves have a particular mosquito-killing capability. Mint oil is also used as an environmentally-friendly insecticide for its ability to kill some common pests like wasps, hornets, ants and cockroaches.

A mint julep is traditionally made of four ingredients: mint, bourbon, sugar and water.

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