

Mexican marigold seeds (Mexican tarragon, Spanish tarragon, Pericón)

Tagetes lucida



Height: 45 – 70 cm

Suitable for: Sun or partial shade in well drained soil.

Summary: The leaves have a warm anise flavour and can be used as a good substitute for french tarragon. From mid summer onwards the plants are covered with clusters of small bright yellow blossoms.

In the UK the plants are generally grown as an annual but with a little frost protection they will shoot again from the base in spring.

More information:

Mexican marigold goes by many names and is a perennial plant native to Mexico and other parts of Central America. In the UK we grow it as an annual herb but it overwinters very successfully in our unheated tunnels in all but the most severe winters, growing away vigorously in spring.

The foliage is a bright and shiny green and can be used just as you would use tarragon. Start snipping leaves as soon as the plants are large enough in early summer, but be sure to leave a few plants unpruned for the bright yellow flowers which will follow from mid summer onwards. Regular dead heading means that the plants will continue to flower into the autumn.

When used in cooking the chopped herb should be added at the end of the cooking time so that the flavour is not lost. Mexican marigold is traditional favourite with all chicken dishes and used as an ingredient in cuisine from Mexico and the South West states of the USA.

Tagetes lucida is recorded to have been used by the Aztecs as a ritual incense, and as an ingredient in their medicinal powders. It is still used today by natives of the more remote areas of central America &mdashl mixed with wild tobacco leaves and is claimed to give psychotropic effects.