

## TARRAGON

### *Artemisia dracunculus* L.

Plant Symbol = ARDR4

Contributed by: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



@ PLANTS

#### Alternate Names

False tarragon, dragon sagewort

#### Uses

*Ethnobotanic:* Tarragon had a wide array of medicinal uses among the Chippewa. The root was used as a gynecological aid to reduce excessive flowing during the menstrual cycle and to aid in difficult labor. The leaves of tarragon were chewed for heart palpitations. The root was also used to make a bath for strengthening children and a steam for strengthening elders. The Shuswap used the plant as a gynecological aid during childbirth. The Shuswap also burned tarragon to keep away mosquitoes. The Ramah Navaho made a lotion from the plant to aid in healing cuts.

#### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species,

state noxious status, and wetland indicator values). It is endangered in Illinois as of 2006.

#### Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site.

#### Description

*General:* Sunflower Family (Asteraceae). Tarragon is a native perennial herb (5-15 dm tall). The stems form clusters and are reddish in color. They can be smooth or covered with short hairs. The leaves are linear to linear-lanceolate. The leaves range in size from 2-8 cm long and up to 6 mm wide. The inflorescences are branched and elongated with pedicellate flowers that mature from the bottom up. Both the whorl of bracts subtending the flower and the stalk of the inflorescence are hairless. The outer florets are fertile but lack stamens. The center florets are sterile.

*Distribution:* For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

*Habitat:* Tarragon is found in dry open places. Common in areas of disturbance, tarragon, increases in frequency where disturbance results in decreased competition.

#### Adaptation

Tarragon is a fire-adapted species. It is top-killed by low-intensity fire, however, it is able to reestablish quickly from surviving rhizomes.

#### Establishment

Tarragon is drought tolerant species. Tarragon grows best in well-drained fertile soil and in full sunlight. Division can achieve propagation. Tarragon also produces numerous wind-dispersed achenes in the fall. Each individual plant should be lifted and divided in early spring every two years. The divisions should be planted 24 inches apart and the roots should be placed 2-3 inches deep.

### **Pests and Potential Problems**

Tarragon may suffer from root rot or mildew if not planted in well-drained soil.

### **Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

These materials are readily available from commercial plant sources.

### **Control**

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

### **References**

- Correl, D.S. & M.C. Johnston 1970. *Manual of the vascular plants of Texas*. Texas Research Foundation, Renner, Texas. 1881 pp.
- Densmore, F. 1974. *How indians use wild plants for food, medicine, and crafts*. Dover Publications Inc., New York, New York. 397pp.
- Great Plains Flora Association 1986. *Flora of the great plains*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 1392 pp.
- Moerman, D.E. 1998. *Native American ethnobotany*. Timber press, Portland, Oregon. 927 pp.
- Moerman, D.E. 1999. *Native American ethnobotany database: Foods, drugs, dyes and fibers of native North American peoples*. The University of Michigan-Dearborn. <http://www.umd.umich.edu/cgi-bin/herb>.
- Palmer, P.A. 1978. *Shuswap indian ethnobotany*. Syesis 8:29-51.
- Sanders, T.W. 1895. *Sanders' encyclopedia of gardening*. A.G.L. Hellyer 1958. Revised. W.H. and L. Collingridge Limited. New York, New York. 526 pp.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory. 2001. *Fire effects information system*. <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/forb/artdra>

Vestal, R.A. 1952. *The ethnobotany of the Ramah Navaho*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology 40(4):1-94.

### **Prepared By:**

*Matthew D. Hurteau*  
Formerly USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, c/o Environmental Horticulture Department, University of California, Davis, California

### **Species Coordinator:**

*M. Kat Anderson*  
USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, c/o Plant Science Department, University of California, Davis, California

Edited: 20nov01 jsp; 17mar03 ahv; 30may06jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

*Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).*