

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Native to Southeast India
Description: Turmeric is the root of the plant, *Curcuma longa*, a member of the ginger family
Uses: Food and medicinal
Harvest: 9 to 10 months after planting
Flower: Beautiful, white flower spikes
Tolerance: Needs temperatures between 68 °F and 86 °F. USDA Zones 7b-10b

General Description: Turmeric comes from the root of *Curcuma longa*, a leafy plant in the ginger family. The root, or rhizome, has a tough brown skin and bright orange flesh. Ground Turmeric comes from fingers which extend from the root. It is boiled or steamed and then dried, and ground. Turmeric has a peppery, warm and bitter flavor and a mild fragrance slightly reminiscent of orange and ginger, and while it is best known as one of the ingredients used to make curry.



- **Native Origin:** Turmeric is native to Indonesia and southern India, where it has been harvested for more than 5,000 years. It has served an important role in many traditional cultures throughout the East, including being a revered member of the Ayurvedic pharmacopeia. While Arab traders introduced it into Europe in the 13th century, it has only recently become popular in Western cultures.
- **Harvest Techniques:** Well drained, fertile soil. Turmeric prefers warm direct or indirect sun. Turmeric is a tropical plant that does well when given abundant heat and moisture. This root will grow well in any region that has a temperate summer, and will die in the winter. USDA Zones 7b-10b. Unless you live in the tropics, where it can be planted anytime, plant in late spring. Fresh roots can be planted directly into soil. Turmeric shoots

appear in about two months from planting. The rhizomes can usually be harvested from seven to ten months after planting, when leaves and stems become dry. When the plant has changed from abundant green to dry, dig up the entire plant, ensuring that you dig up the entire root (as this is the part that is used medicinally). Plan to harvest your turmeric root at the end of the summer growing season.

- **Season of Harvest:** Rhizomes are harvested 9 to 10 months after planting, the lower leaves turning yellow or stems drying and falling over are indications of maturity. It is possible for the home gardener to just dig carefully at the side of a clump and remove rhizomes as needed rather than harvesting the whole clump.
- **Culinary Uses:** Turmeric's active ingredient is curcumin. Ground turmeric comprises 25% of curry powder and is used to give it a yellow color. The harvested rhizomes are boiled and sun-dried for 7-8 days but can be used fresh. It is also used as a yellow food dye, replacing tetrazine. Leaves wrapped around fish flavor it during cooking. In Indonesia, the young shoots and rhizome tips are eaten raw.
- **Nutritional Value:** Turmeric is commonly used as an anti-inflammatory, particularly for digestive disorders and to promote liver health through the stimulation of bile production. It has been used to treat certain skin diseases, and is also believed to be effective in improving the function of the gallbladder. More generally, turmeric has shown itself to be useful in fighting infection and reducing inflammation. Turmeric contains high amounts of antioxidants, which are thought to reduce the body's risk of cancer.
- **Medicinal Purposes:** According to WebMD, Turmeric is used for arthritis, heartburn (dyspepsia), stomach pain, diarrhea, intestinal gas, stomach bloating, loss of appetite, jaundice, liver problems and gallbladder disorders. It is also used for headaches, bronchitis, colds, lung infections, fibromyalgia, leprosy, fever, menstrual problems, and cancer. Other uses include depression, Alzheimer's disease, water retention, worms, and kidney problems. Some people apply turmeric to the skin for pain, ringworm, bruising, leech bites, eye infections, inflammatory skin conditions, soreness inside of the mouth, and infected wounds.

Turmeric	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Monocots
(unranked):	Commelinids
Order:	Zingiberales

Family:	Zingiberaceae
Genus:	Curcuma
Species:	C. longa

Sources

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/610223/turmeric>

<http://www.turmericinfo.com>

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<http://www.globalhealingcenter.com/organic-herbs/growing-turmeric>

<http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-supplements/ingredientmono-662-TURMERIC.aspx?activeIngredientId=662&activeIngredientName=TURMERIC>