

Spotlight on Plant

Watercress

Scientific name: **Nasturtium officinale**



Watercress is an aquatic perennial herb found in abundance alongside slow running waterways and nearby natural springs. This peppery flavored greens has been in cultivation since ancient times for its food and medicinal uses.

Botanically this fast growing, leafy vegetable belongs to the

Brassicaceae family, and

closely related to mustard greens, garden cress, cabbage, arugula, etc.

Health benefits

- Peppery and tangy flavored cress is a storehouse of many natural phytonutrients like *isothiocyanates* that have health promotional and disease prevention properties.
- antioxidant rich, low-calorific and low-fat vegetable labeled as the most nutrient dense food, it tops the list of "powerhouse fruits and vegetables".
- higher concentration of **ascorbic acid** (vitamin C) than some of the fruits and vegetables. 100 g of leaves provide 47 mg or 72% of RDA of vitamin C

- excellent vegetable sources for **vitamin-K**; 100 g provides over 200% of daily recommended intake.

Vitamin K has potential role in bone health through promoting osteotrophic (bone formation and strengthening) activity. Adequate vitamin-K levels in the diet help limit neuronal damage in the brain; it has established role in the treatment of patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

- excellent source of **vitamin-A**, and flavonoids antioxidants like **β carotene**, lutein and zeaxanthin.
- rich in B-complex group of vitamins such as riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B-6 thiamin and pantothenic acid that are essential for optimum cellular metabolic functions.
- rich source of minerals like copper, **calcium**, **potassium**, **magnesium**, **manganese** and **phosphorus**.

Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps controlling heart rate and blood pressure by countering effects of sodium.

Manganese is used by the body as a co-factor for the antioxidant enzyme, *superoxide dismutase*. **Calcium** is required as bone/teeth mineral and in the regulation of heart and skeletal muscle activity

Regular inclusion of cress in the diet has been found to prevent osteoporosis, anemia, and vitamin-A deficiency and believed to protect from cardiovascular diseases and colon and prostate cancers.