

# Exploring Tulsi's Medicinal Magic: A Guide to Varieties and Healing Powers

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## ABSTRACT

Explore the profound healing potential of Tulsi, also known as Holy Basil, in this comprehensive guide. Unveiling various Tulsi varieties, from traditional *Ocimum sanctum* to lesser-known types, it navigates through their diverse medicinal properties. Emphasizing Tulsi's historical significance and contemporary relevance, the guide illuminates its role in stress reduction, immune enhancement, and holistic well-being. Offering insights into cultivation and practical applications, this resource bridges ancient wisdom with modern wellness. Ideal for those seeking a deeper understanding of Tulsi's therapeutic magic, it serves as a concise yet valuable tool for integrating this herb into a health-conscious lifestyle.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**ulsi, or Holy Basil, holds a special place in Hindu traditions and is renowned for its medicinal properties across various cultures. Derived from the

Sanskrit word meaning 'matchless one,' this herb, scientifically known as *Ocimum Sanctum*, flourishes in warm tropical areas, growing up to 30 to 60 cm in height with

fragrant, erect branches. Its simple elliptic leaves and small purple flowers, arranged in elongated racemes, add to its distinctive features. With a history dating back to 3500 to 1600 B.C., (Meenakshi Chauhan 2019) as mentioned in the Rigveda, Tulsi is often hailed as the "queen of herbs." Rich in vitamins A and C, calcium, zinc, and iron, it also boasts antibacterial properties and the ability to purify water. Beyond its medicinal attributes, Tulsi, a sacred symbol for Hindus, reflects its cultural and spiritual significance.



As a member of the *Ocimum* genus in the Lamiaceae plant family, this annual herb is native to India and widely cultivated in Southeast Asia, thriving in temperate climates and embodying a versatile and revered presence in various aspects of life.

### Different varieties of Tulsi:

Various regions around the globe cultivate different types of basil, and among the extensively utilized varieties, they can be broadly classified into two groups – holy basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) and Mediterranean basil (*Ocimum basilicum*). (Nisha Bhardwaj 2019).

#### 1. Holy Basil

Tulsi, revered as a symbol of wealth and health in Hinduism, is a highly esteemed houseplant in India associated with Ayurveda. Its strong medicinal properties distinguish it from other basil species. Popular varieties, known by names like Rama Tulsi and Krishna Tulsi, vary regionally, with four main species collectively known as Holy Basil.

1. Rama Tulsi belongs to the *Ocimum Sanctum* species.
2. Krishna Tulsi is a member of the *Ocimum tenuiflorum* species.

3. Amrita Tulsi is another variety within the *Ocimum tenuiflorum* species.
4. Vana Tulsi is part of the *Ocimum gratissimum* species.

#### 2. Mediterranean Basil

Referred to as Sweet Basil, this widely distributed basil variety is prevalent across Asia, Europe, America, and Africa. Recognized by various names such as the king of herbs, royal herb, great basil, and Saint-Joseph's-wort, it holds the title of the most consumed herb globally. Its extensive use in culinary applications spans various popular cuisines, including Italian and Thai. (Bandana 2022).

5. Sweet Basil belongs to the *Ocimum basilicum* species.
6. Thai Basil is a variety of *Ocimum thyrsoflora*.
7. Purple Basil falls under the *Ocimum basilicum* category.
8. Lemon Basil is a type of *Ocimum citriodorum*.
9. Vietnamese Basil is associated with *Ocimum cinnamon*.
10. American Basil is classified under *Ocimum americanum*.
11. African Blue Basil is a subtype of *Ocimum kilimandscharicum*.
12. Italian Genovese Basil is a variation of *Ocimum basilicum*.

1. **Rama Tulsi belongs to the *Ocimum Sanctum* species:** Rama Tulsi, scientifically known as *Ocimum sanctum*, is characterized by its vibrant



green leaves and enhanced resilience to winter conditions and sunlight. This aromatic herb thrives outdoors, requiring regular watering and fertilization, particularly during seasons other than winter. Known as the "Queen of herbs," Rama Tulsi holds a revered status and is commonly found in households throughout India. It flourishes best in full sun exposure and is adaptable to temperatures ranging from 15 to 40 degrees Celsius.

2. **Krishna Tulsi is a member of the *Ocimum tenuiflorum* species:** Krishna Tulsi, scientifically named *Ocimum Tenuiflorum*, is characterized by its distinctive purple fringed leaves and stems, offering a pungent and robust taste. This species boasts enhanced medicinal properties compared to other varieties. Ideal for outdoor cultivation, Krishna Tulsi thrives in full sun exposure, requiring daily watering, except during the winter months. It flourishes in temperatures ranging from 20 to 45 degrees Celsius, making it a resilient and flavorful herb.



3. **Amrita Tulsi is another variety within the *Ocimum tenuiflorum* species:** Amrita Tulsi, also known as tea basil or holy basil, is an aromatic plant native to the Indian subcontinent and widely cultivated in Southeast Asia. With its erect, many-branched subshrub structure, it stands 30– 60 cm tall, featuring hairy stems and scented green leaves. This sacred species of holy basil is less commonly grown but cherished for its pleasing aroma and taste, often used in tea.



"Amrita" in Sanskrit translates to "immortality" or "nectar of immortality." Ideal for outdoor cultivation in full sun, it requires daily watering, excluding winters, and thrives in temperatures ranging from 15 to 40 degrees Celsius.

4. **Vana Tulsi is part of the *Ocimum gratissimum* species:** Vana Tulsi, also known as the "forest type," is a woody perennial, aromatic, and sacred holy basil species in India. Recognized for its fragrant nature, this plant features green leaves, stems, and white blossoms. Typically found in the Himalayas and Indian plains, Vana Tulsi grows wild in Asia and Africa, where it is also utilized for medicinal purposes. When cultivating Vana Tulsi outdoors, it thrives in full sun, requires daily watering (except during winters), and favors temperatures ranging from 15 to 40 degrees Celsius.



5. **Sweet Basil belongs to the *Ocimum basilicum* species:** Known for its robust culinary uses, Basil, with its sizable green leaves, is a popular and frequently grown aromatic herb. Thriving in full sun outdoors, it demands regular watering (except in winters) and flourishes within a temperature range of 10 to 35 degrees Celsius, making it a versatile and beloved addition to gardens and kitchens alike.



6. **Thai Basil is a variety of *Ocimum thrysiflora*:** Thai Basil, a perennial and aromatic culinary basil species, is distinguished by its pointed green



leaves, reddish-purple stems, and dark purple flowers. Ideally suited for outdoor cultivation, it thrives in full sun, necessitating daily watering (excluding winters), and favors temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. Known by the common name Thai Basil, its botanical name is *Ocimum thyrsoiflora*.

7. **Purple Basil falls under the *Ocimum basilicum* category:** Purple Basil, a commonly cultivated perennial aromatic basil species, is recognized by its larger purple leaves and stems. Ideal for outdoor growth, it thrives in full sun, requiring daily watering (excluding winters), and prefers temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. Known by the common name Purple Basil, its botanical name is *Ocimum basilicum*.



8. **Lemon Basil is a type of *Ocimum citriodorum*:** Lemon Basil, a perennial aromatic and culinary basil species, is distinguished by its green leaves, white flowers, and a robust lemon scent. All parts of the plant, including flowers, leaves, and stems, are edible. Also known as hoary basil, Thai lemon basil, or Lao basil, it is a hybrid of sweet basil and American basil. Ideally suited for outdoor cultivation, Lemon Basil thrives in full sun, requires daily watering (excluding winters), and favors temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius.



9. **Vietnamese Basil is associated with *Ocimum cinnamom*:** Vietnamese Basil, a perennial aromatic and culinary basil



variety, features green leaves, reddish-purple stems, and pink flowers. Suited for outdoor cultivation, it thrives in full sun, requires daily watering (excluding winters), and prefers temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. Recognized by the common name Vietnamese Basil, its botanical name is *Ocimum cinnamom*.

10. **American Basil is classified under *Ocimum americanum*:** American Basil, a perennial aromatic and culinary basil species, is renowned for its high quality, characterized by rich color, sweet flavor, and uniform particle size. The plant features green pointed leaves, purple stems, and purple flowers. Ideal for outdoor cultivation, it thrives in full sun, requires daily watering (excluding winters), and prefers temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. Commonly known as American Basil, its botanical name is *Ocimum americanum*.



11. **African Blue Basil is a subtype of *Ocimum kilimandscharicum*:** Blue Basil, also known as Kapur Tulsi, is a perennial aromatic and culinary basil species characterized by green leaves and purple flowers. Notable for its robust camphor scent, all parts of the plant, including flowers, leaves, and stems, are edible. Suited for outdoor cultivation, it thrives in full sun, requires daily watering (excluding winters), and favors temperatures ranging from 10 to 35 degrees Celsius. With the common names Blue Basil and Kapur Tulsi, its botanical name is *Ocimum kilimandscharicum*.



12. **Italian Genovese Basil is a variation of *Ocimum basilicum*:** Italian Basil, a

widely cultivated perennial aromatic and culinary species, is characterized by its large, dark green leaves. This classic Italian basil variety is commonly grown outdoors, featuring sizable green leaves and stems. Suited for full sun exposure, it requires daily watering, excluding winters, and thrives within a temperature range of 10 to 35 degrees Celsius.



Recognized by the common name Italian Basil, its botanical name is *Ocimum basilicum*.

### Benefits and Medicinal properties of Tulsi:

- 1. Natural Immunity Enhancement:** Tulsi, abundant in Vitamin C and zinc, serves as a natural booster for the immune system, guarding against infections. Its significant antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties provide protection against a range of infections. Extracts from Tulsi leaves enhance the activity of T helper cells and natural killer cells, thereby fortifying the immune system.
- 2. Reduces Fever (antipyretic), Pain (analgesic) and Reduces Cold, Cough & Other Respiratory Disorders:** Tulsi has antipyretic and analgesic properties, making it useful for reducing fever and relieving pain. Its antibacterial and antiviral qualities aid in fighting infections and lowering fever. Fresh Tulsi juice with black pepper powder is known to effectively treat periodic fevers. Boiling Tulsi leaves with cardamom powder in half a liter of water, along with sugar and milk, is an effective remedy for lowering body temperature. The presence of camphene, cineole, and eugenol in Tulsi helps alleviate cold and chest congestion. A mixture of Tulsi juice, honey, and ginger is effective in treating
- 3. Reduces Stress, Blood Pressure and Good for Heart health:** Tulsi is rich in compounds such as Ocimumosides A and B, which play a key role in stress reduction by balancing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine in the brain. Additionally, the anti-inflammatory properties of Tulsi contribute to a decrease in inflammation and blood pressure. This herb has a significant impact on the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. It achieves this by lowering blood lipid levels, suppressing ischemia and stroke, reducing hypertension, and harnessing its potent antioxidant properties.
- 4. Having Anti-Cancer properties and Good for Diabetic Patients:** The phytochemicals found in Tulsi exhibit robust antioxidant properties, providing protection against skin, liver, oral, and lung cancers. Furthermore, the extract from Tulsi leaves has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing blood glucose levels in individuals diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.
- 5. Useful in kidney Stones, Gouty Arthritis and Gastrointestinal Disorders:** Tulsi serves as a detoxifying agent with diuretic properties, aiding in the elimination of toxins from the body. It plays a role in reducing uric acid levels, a key factor in the formation of kidney stones, and brings relief to individuals with Gout. Additionally, Tulsi leaves are beneficial in treating indigestion, loss of appetite, flatulence, and bloating.
- 6. Good for Skin and Hair:** Tulsi offers multifaceted benefits for both skin and hair. Rich in antioxidants, it effectively clears blemishes and acne, while also preventing premature aging. The herb strengthens hair roots, preventing hair loss, and its

bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough, and cold.

antifungal properties combat fungus and dandruff. Tulsi serves as a safe and extensive skin cream, showcasing benefits when consumed or applied. It brightens the skin, treats acne marks, and, when mixed with eggs, tightens skin pores. Tulsi is effective against skin infections and allergies, promoting skin texture improvement and dark spot lightening. Applied to hair, Tulsi prevents hair fall, delays graying, reduces dandruff, and prevents dry scalp, contributing to overall hair health and appearance.

**7. Helps in Weight Loss:** Tulsi serves as a natural component that facilitates weight loss. For those seeking a quick and side-effect-free fat-burning solution, incorporating tulsi tea into your routine is beneficial. Consuming two cups a day can yield noticeable results. It's important to note that the effectiveness of tulsi tea is enhanced when combined with regular exercise. While tulsi tea can contribute to weight loss even without physical activity, engaging in exercise accelerates the process. The weight loss benefits of tulsi tea include its ability to regulate metabolism, aid in the absorption of essential nutrients, promote a healthy digestive system, and provide a calorie free energy boost, enhancing stamina. (Nahak *et al.* 2011)

### Importance

Tulsi beads are commonly worn by individuals due to their believed physical and medicinal attributes. The wood of Tulsi is regarded as more potent than other gems, serving as a protective measure against negative influences. Additionally, various handicraft jewelry items crafted from Tulsi wood are available for purchase. (kumar *et al.* 2010)

### Cultural Importance

Tulsi, revered as a sacred plant dear to Lord Vishnu, holds great significance in the Indian subcontinent as a symbol of purity. Named after Tulasi Devi, one of Lord Krishna's eternal consorts, Tulsi is cultivated and worshipped by people across India. Its leaves find purpose in temple rituals and various ceremonies, including marriages. In Hindu households, a courtyard without a Tulsi plant is deemed incomplete, and it is believed to bring about longevity and lifelong happiness. Special Tulsi puja takes place in the Kartik month, marked by the Tulsi vivah, a symbolic marriage ceremony where the plant is adorned like a bride. Even in contemporary times, people in India maintain potted Tulsi plants, with women engaging in daily rituals of watering, lighting a diya, and worshiping it. Every part of the Tulsi plant, from stems to seeds and soil, is regarded as sacred, and according to ancient texts, Tulsi is revered for its role in fostering a connection between individuals and the divine.

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