



## PLANT FACT SHEET

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# *Nigella sativa* L.

GENUS *Nigella* FAMILY Ranunculaceae

COMMON NAMES Nigella, Black seed

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

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**Edible parts:** Seeds, Herb, Spice, Flowers

The seeds are used as a spice in pickles. It has a peppery taste.

They are also used in Turkish bread. They are sprinkled on rolls, flatbreads and cakes, Jewish rye bread, or used as flavouring in curries, pickles and preserved lemons.

The flowers are used to flavour foods.

CAUTION: It should not be used in large amounts.

## DESCRIPTION

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An annual herb plant. It grows to 60 cm high and spreads 50 cm across. The stem is erect and branches. The leaves are greyish green and deeply divided. It has cream and white flowers which may have a blue tinge. They occur at the ends of branches. The flowers are 25 mm across. The seed pod is inflated and the seeds are black. The seed pod is like a poppy capsule. There are 5 seed bearing compartments with a crown of vertical prominent spikes. The seeds are three cornered. They are small and black. They are 3 mm long.

## HABITAT

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A Mediterranean climate plant. It is a native of Syria. It prefers rich moist well drained soils. It needs an open sunny position. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 7-10.

## PRODUCTION

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### Cultivation

It is grown from seed.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

The capsules are harvested as they ripen but before they shatter dispersing the seed. These are then dried and threshed to get the seed.

## NOTES

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There are about 20 *Nigella* species. It has anticancer properties.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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