

How to Trap a Mint

Have you ever planted a beautiful little mint plant, and then watched in horror as it grew into a **“GREEN MONSTER”**, taking over every square inch of your garden bed and choking out your other plants? Hey, it’s not the mint’s fault! They’re made that way!

Mints propagate three ways: They produce flowers, and most produce seeds. They also propagate by “layering”. When a stem of the plant lies on the ground, it puts out roots. This produces a new plant, which can be separated from the mother plant. The third method of propagation is the one that drives us crazy! Like Bermudagrass, mints put out underground stems (called rhizomes) and rhizomes produce buds from which new plants will grow. Once those rhizomes start invading your garden, it’s almost impossible to find and remove all of them. So, the trick is to keep the **“GREEN MONSTER”** under control. Here’s how:



Start with a 5-gallon (or larger) pot.

With a pair of garden shears or a tree saw, remove the bottom of the pot.



Dig a hole that is slightly wider than and almost as deep as the pot.

Plant the pot, leaving about one to two inches above ground.

Backfill and tamp down the soil outside of the pot.

Remove the mint from its original pot by gently squeezing the sides of the pot to loosen the soil. Turn the pot upside down and encourage the plant to tumble into your hand.

Gently scrape the sides and bottom of the root ball with your fingernails or a garden tool if the plant is root-bound (the roots have circled the pot).



Fill the prepared 5-gallon pot with rich, well-composted soil.

Plant the mint inside of the pot and gently press down the soil.

Be sure to plant the mint in its new pot at the same level that it was in its original pot. Make sure that the soil inside of the pot is at the same level as the soil outside of the pot.

Water well with a liquid fertilizer or starter solution at half the recommended strength.

Make sure the soil is well-firmed around the plant. Check again after the water soaks in and add soil if necessary.



Remember that mints also propagate by layering.

Be sure to trim the stems of your mint so that they don't lie on the ground and put out roots. Periodically run your hand around the outside of the pot to make sure that no stems have put out roots.



Also, watch for and remove volunteer seedlings. Mints cross breed easily, and most of the seedlings will not taste like the original plant, or even taste very good. Enjoy your mint plant! *Carolyn Hills, Master Gardener and member of the Arizona Herb Association*