

Who would have thought...

Sometimes the simplest solutions are right beneath our noses, and peppermint, which grows abundantly in our community gardens is a perfect example of this.

Truly a marvel of the botanical world, this herb aids digestion, enhances memory, eases nausea, assists with sleeplessness, and reduces tension, while simultaneously increasing energy and strength. A hot cup of peppermint tea can quickly ease congestion, expand bronchioles and sinuses, and soothe away a trying headache.

The diverse properties of this plant further extend to our gardens where it offers protection from the potentially

dangerous effects of mice in our sheds and compost bins. Besides possibly damaging tools, supplies, and the shed itself, the urine, feces, and saliva of mice can cause allergic reactions such as sinus pain, coughs, congestion, sore throat, and headache. They can exacerbate existing asthmatic conditions and COPD, and in the worst case scenario, can cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare respiratory disease which can be fatal one to five (1 - 5) weeks after airborne exposure to fresh droppings. For this reason, the shed should not be swept until all signs of rodents have been wiped clean with a mixture of bleach and water in a ratio of 6:1, while wearing gloves and a mask.

Fortunately for us, the refreshing scent of mint that most of us are revitalized by, overpowers and repels mice.

Bundles of fresh peppermint stalks may be hung from the rafters or the walls, and handfuls of the loose herb may be strewn around the periphery of the shed, and tossed on the compost bin. A large pot, or several pots of it, may be grown outside the shed for easy access to the herb, and for further protection from these unwanted visitors.

To further strengthen this olfactory barrier, peppermint essential oil may be purchased from health stores for under \$10, and 10 - 15 drops of it applied to cotton pads or cotton balls, where it can be placed in corners, or in areas where signs of mice are evident.

While we bask in the scent of the healing properties of this herbal helpmate, mice are most often sent running, reminding us that nature has solutions for all that ails us, and that it is indeed a great ally for the creation and preservation of our health and that of our garden.

