

# *Ocimum tenuiflorum*

**Common name:** Holy basil and Tulsi

**Family:** Lamiaceae

**Habit:** Herb

**Location:** Botanical garden, Virsa Ghar, Science Block

**Distribution:** It is native to tropical and subtropical regions of Australia, Malesia, Asia, and the western Pacific. It is widely cultivated throughout the Southeast Asian tropics. This plant has escaped from cultivation and has naturalized in many tropical regions of the Americas. It is an agricultural and environmental weed.

## **Description:**

Holy basil is an erect, many-branched subshrub, 30–60 cm (12–24 in) tall with hairy stems. Leaves are green or purple; they are simple, petioled, with an ovate blade up to 5 cm (2 in) long, which usually has a slightly toothed margin; they are strongly scented and have a decussate phyllotaxy. The purplish flowers are placed in close whorls on elongated racemes. Inflorescence is verticillaster. The three main morphotypes cultivated in India and Nepal are Ram tulsi (the most common type, with broad bright green leaves that are slightly sweet), the less common purplish green-leaved (Krishna or Shyam tulsi) and the common wild vana tulsi (e.g., *Ocimum gratissimum*).

## **Uses:**

Tulsi has been used in Ayurvedic and Siddha practices for its supposed medicinal properties. Tulsi is a sacred plant for Hindus, particularly the Vaishnavite sect. It is worshipped as the avatar of Lakshmi and is often planted in courtyards of Hindu houses or temples to Hanuman. Tulsi leaves are used to treat skin problems like acne, blackheads and premature ageing, treat insect bites, asthma, heart diseases, fever, respiratory problems, cure fever, common cold and sore throat, headaches and kidney stones.

