

## Using Stevia

Crushing the dried leaves is the final step in releasing Stevia's sweetening power. This can be done either by hand or, for greater effect, in a coffee grinder or in a special blender for herbs.

## Approximate Equivalent

1/3 tsp. powdered extract = 1 cup sugar

3/4 tsp, liquid extract = 1 cup sugar

1 1/2-2 tbs. powdered leaf = 1 cup sugar

## Making Liquid Stevia Extract

Bring two cups of purified water to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and add 1/4 cup of crushed or powdered dried leaves. Cover and boil for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and steep the herb in covered pot until cool. Strain through a cheesecloth and refrigerate in a covered container. The concentrate will be dark greenish black in color.

For a cold extraction soak 1/4 cup of powered leaf in 1-2 cups of water for 8-12 hours on the counter. Strain through a cheesecloth.

For a stronger concentrate, simmer the liquid (from either method) uncovered on the stove until it is reduced by half. Refrigerate.

Many recipes are available from: BAKING WITH STEVIA, by Rita Depuydt, published by Sun Coast Enterprises, 1997, ISBN 0-9656073-0-5.

Another good resource: STEVIA Rebaudiana, Nature's Sweet Secret, by David Richard, Vital Health Publishing, third edition 1999.

We also have recipes using Stevia on the Recipes Page at our website:  
[www.snakeroot.net/farm](http://www.snakeroot.net/farm).

## Stevia from Us

We offer Stevia in two forms. Live potted plants are available from June through September. Dried crushed fall-harvested leaves in one ounce bags are generally available year-round.

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# Snakeroot Organic Farm

Owned and operated by  
Tom Roberts & Lois Labbe

27 Organic Farm Road, Pittsfield Maine 04967  
487-5056 • <http://www.snakeroot.net/farm>  
Tom@snakeroot.net • Lois@snakeroot.net

*Gardeners to the public since 1995.*



## The natural non-sugar sweetener

Stevia Rebaudiana is an herb in the Compositae (Daisy) family. It is a small shrub native to parts of Paraguay and Brazil. The glycosides in its leaves make it incredibly sweet, without the presence of any sugars. Stevia has been used to sweeten beverages and medicines since Pre-Columbian times. A scientist named Antonio Bertoni first recorded its usage by native tribes in 1887.

from Snakeroot Organic Farm

## About Stevia

A member of the daisy family, Stevia is the world's only all-natural sweetener with zero calories, zero carbohydrates and a zero glycemic index. These attributes make Stevia a good alternative to sugar or chemical sweeteners. Especially popular as a sweetener for coffees and teas, Stevia can also be used in cooking and baking, helping you reduce your calorie intake and stay healthy.

Native Americans in Paraguay have safely used Stevia for hundreds of years, valuing the herbal sweetener not only for its delicious taste but also for its medicinal healing properties. Stevia has also been used extensively as a sweetener in Japan, where it has been the calorie-free sweetener of choice for more than three decades. Meanwhile the product continues to gain popularity amongst health-conscious people in America, where it can be found in dietary supplement items, protein drinks, energy bars, aromatherapy steam showers and a wide range of teas.

## Growing Stevia

Because tender young Stevia plants are especially sensitive to low temperatures, it's important that you wait until the danger of frost is past and soil temperatures are well into the 50's and 60's before transplanting them into your garden.

Once you begin, it's best to plant your Stevia in rows 20 to 24 inches apart, leaving about 18 inches between plants. Your plants should grow to a height of about 30 inches and a width of 18 to 24 inches.

Stevia plants do best in a rich, loamy soil—the same kind in which common garden-variety plants thrive. Since the feeder roots tend to be quite near the surface, it is a good idea to add compost for extra nutrients if your soil is sandy.

Besides being sensitive to cold during their developmental stage, the roots can also be adversely affected by excessive levels of moisture. So take care not to overwater them and to make sure the soil in which they are planted drains easily and isn't soggy or subject to flooding or puddling.

Frequent light watering is recommended during the summer months. Adding a layer of compost or your favorite mulch around each Stevia plant will help keep the shallow feeder roots from drying out.

Stevia plants respond well to fertilizers with a lower nitrogen content than the fertilizer's phosphoric acid or potash content. Most organic fertilizers (compost) work well, since they release nitrogen slowly.

## Harvesting the Leaves

Although you can pinch off a few leaves to use at any time during the season, your major harvest should be done as late as possible, since cool autumn temperatures and shorter days tend to intensify the sweetness of the plants as they evolve into a reproductive state. While exposure to frost is still to be avoided, covering the plants during an early frost can give you the benefit of another few weeks' growth and more sweetness.

When the time does come to harvest your Stevia, the easiest technique is to cut the

branches off with pruning shears before stripping the leaves. As an extra bonus, you might also want to clip off the very tips of the stems and add them to your harvest, as they are apt to contain as much stevioside as do the leaves.

If you live in a relatively frost-free climate, your plants may well be able to survive the winter outside, provided you do not cut the branches too short (leaving about 4 inches of stem at the base during pruning). In that case, your most successful harvest will probably come in the second year. Three-year-old plants will not be as productive and, ideally, should be replaced with new cuttings.

Taking cuttings will form the basis for the next year's crop. Cuttings need to be rooted before planting, using either commercial rooting hormones or a natural base made from willow tree tips, pulverized onto a slurry in your blender. After dipping the cuttings in such a preparation, they should be planted in a rooting medium for two to three weeks, giving the new root system a chance to form. They should then be potted—preferably in 4.5-inch pots—and placed in the sunniest and least drafty part of your home until the following spring.

Once all your leaves have been harvested you will need to dry them. This can be accomplished on a screen or net. The drying process is not one that requires excessive heat; more important is good air circulation. On a moderately warm fall day, your Stevia crop can be quick dried in the full sun in about 12 hours. (Drying times longer than that will lower the stevioside content of the final product.) A home dehydrator can also be used, although sun drying is the preferred method.