**Tropaeolum majus**  
[tro-pee-oh-lum MAY-jus]

**Family:** Tropaeolaceae

**Names:** Kapuzinerkresse (German); capucine (French); cappuccina, nasturzio, tropeolo (Italian); Nasturcja, Nasturcja (Polish)

**Description:** Grow from six inches to about twelve inches tall. The trailing varieties spread outward horizontally and can be trained upward on a trellis 6-8 feet high. The leaves are smooth and round, ranging from on-half to three inches in diameter. Pale green veins radiate outward from the center of the leaf. The underside is a lighter green than the top of the leaf. The leafstalk is fleshy and easily curls around anything it touches. There are many hybrid cultivars but 'Whirlybird' has no spur, making it easier to clean—no place for insects to hide. The colors are cream, tangerine, soft salmon, bright gold, deep mahogany, bright scarlet and cherry-rose. Other recommended varieties are 'Alaska' with variegated leaves, 'Empress of India' and 'Gleam' for climbing.

**Cultivation:** Sow in spring in cool, fertile soil in a position sheltered from wind and too much sun; they need regular and frequent watering. Will grow in poor soil, as long as well-drained. Too rich soil or fertilisation results in luxuriant leaf growth but little flower production. Plant seeds outdoors two weeks before the last frost. Cover with one-half inch of soil and water well. Depending on the variety they can grow into large mounds, spreading 12-24 inches, so allow enough space between each plant. They are susceptible to mealybugs and especially to aphids. If a forceful spray with a water hose doesn't do the trick use an insecticidal soap on the infested areas. The leaves and flowers should be collected between mid-summer and mid-Fall for medicinal purposes.

**History:** The shape of the leaves, round and glabrous, recall the shield on which the ancients placed the victors' trophies (tropalon) and accounts for the generic name. The common name comes from the Latin nasus, nose and torquere to twist or nose twisters. Originally a plant from Peru, Louis XIV of France had nasturtiums growing in his royal gardens. In the Victorian language of flowers, nasturtium signifies patriotism. This flower is associated with one of Poland's best loved poets, Jan Kasprowicz (1860-1926). They became the subject matter of the last verse of his last book and the title of one of his biographies due to his love of them.

**Properties:** stimulant, antiseptic, diuretic, antiscorbutic, anti-microbial

**Constituents:** a glucoside glucotropeolin which on hydrolysis forms sulphur compounds with an antibiotic action, large amounts of sulfur (which reputedly retards baldness).

**Medicinal Uses:** Nasturtium is an antiseptic and digestive herb, also used to treat respiratory and urinary disorders, scurvy and poor skin and
hair. Externally for baldness, minor injuries and skin eruptions. Seeds are a vermifuge and crushed for use in poultices for boils and sores. Controls fungal and bacterial infections because of it’s anti-microbial properties. It has been found to be beneficial in influenza and the common cold. Some herbalists report it to be indicated in infections of the female reproductive system.

**Dosage:** Most effective used fresh
Infusion: Pour a cup of boiling water on 1-2 tsp of the fresh leaves and let infuse for 10-15 minutes. Drink 3 times a day
Tincture: Take 1-4ml 3 times a day

**Flower Essence:** Nasturtium is indicated for those times when the soul overuses or overextends the thinking forces, so that they are no longer in alignment with the lower, metabolic forces of life and warmth. It is very helpful for students, those whose career demands strong intellectual activity, or for any phase of life where the intellect predominates. It brings warmth and vitality to the thinking process and helps the individual to direct its light into the practical experiences of daily life and physical reality.

**Cosmetic Uses:** Nasturtium makes a refreshing hair tonic.
Nasturtium Hair Tonic: 3 oz each of nasturtium leaves, flowers and seeds, 3 oz young nettles, 1 pint alcohol, few drops of rosemary oil

Mince the nasturtiums and nettles in a household mincer and steep in the alcohol for at least a week. Then thoroughly marinated, strain and add a few drops of rosemary oil. Massage into the scalp with the fingertips or applied on a hair brush.

**Culinary Use:** chopped leaves may garnish mixed salads, vegetables, pasta, meat dishes and sorbets and their taste is similar to that of rocket or cress. The flowers have a spicy-peppery flavor. Young leaves can be used in sandwiches and the older large ones can be used to wrap and cook food in. Sprinkle the blossoms and small leaves over butter-sautéed fish fillets. Combine with cucumbers and a simple vinaigrette. Fill an omelet with the blossoms before folding and garnish with a dollop of sour cream and more blossoms. Nasturtium seeds, which have a sharper, more mustard-like flavor can be used in place of capers.

**Recipes:**

**Nasturtium Spring Rolls**
8 fresh nasturtium leaves
8 fresh nasturtium flowers
8 medium red lettuce leaves
1 small ripe mango
1 small cucumber, peeled
2 oz dried rice vermicelli
16 fresh peppermint leaves
8 12-inch dried rice paper wrappers

Peel the mango. Slice the fruit into 8 equal pieces. Julienne-slice the cucumber. In a medium bowl, rehydrate the vermicelli in boiling water, about 2 minutes. Drain. Arrange all the ingredients on a platter beside a large bowl of warm water. Place a wrapper in the water to rehydrate, about 15 seconds. Lay it flat on a damp kitchen towel. Cover half the wrapper with a lettuce leaf. Top with 2 Tbsp of noodles, several cucumber strips, a mango slice, a nasturtium leaf, a flower and two mint leaves. Fold the wrapper in half to close. Fold both ends in toward the center. Roll the wrapper up from the bottom, lengthwise, to form a tube. Set aside on a platter. Repeat with the remaining rolls. Well covered, the spring rolls stay fresh for about 2 hours. (The Healing Kitchen)

**Stuffed Nasturtiums**
20 whole flower nasturtium blossoms
1 8 oz pkg cream cheese softened
½ cup green chilies (4 oz)
4 nasturtium leaves, finely chopped
½ green pepper, finely chopped

Carefully rinse blossoms in cool water and lay on paper towel to dry. Mix well all other ingredients until smooth. Stuff blossoms carefully and lay on a bed of leaf lettuce (Edible Flowers: a Recipe Collection)

**Radiatore with Nasturtiums and Snow Peas**
8 oz radiatore, cooked al dente and drained
1 cup snow peas, lightly blanched
6 Tbsp creamy ranch dressing
3 Tbsp basil leaves, finely chopped (can use purple)
1/2 cup nasturtium flowers
1/3 cup nasturtium leaves
ruby leaf lettuce, coarsely chopped

Mix pasta with peas, dressing and basil leaves. Toss well. Add petals from half of the nasturtiums and nasturtium leaves and gently toss. Serve on a bed of ruby leaf lettuce, garnished with remaining flowers. (Edible Flowers from Garden to Palate)

Salmon Nasturtium Pizza
Pizza dough for a 10- to 12- inch pie
1 cup peas, pureed
1/8 cup olive oil
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
salt and pepper to taste
1 cup frisee or chicory--small leaves
6 slices smoked salmon
1/4 cup red onion, thinly sliced
15 nasturtium flowers

Preheat oven to 450F. shape pizza dough and bake for 2-3 minutes. Do not allow it to brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Puree peas with olive oil and Parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Spread on pizza dough and bake for 5 minutes. Remove from oven and arrange salmon, onion and flowers on top. (Edible Flowers from Garden to Palate)

Nasturtiums Filled with Guacamole
1 large avocado
2 tsp lime juice
1 small ripe tomato, very finely chopped
2 Tbsp finely minced onion
1 jalapeno or serrano chili, seeded, finely minced
1 small clove garlic, finely minced
salt
about 20 nasturtium blossoms
1 small jicama
lime juice

Peel the avocado and remove the pit. Mash the avocado in a bowl with a fork and add the 2 teaspoons lime juice. Blend in the tomato, onion, chili and garlic. Add salt to taste. Let the guacamole stand, covered, while preparing the nasturtiums and jicama. Rinse the nasturtiums carefully and pat them dry. Peel the jicama and slice it about ¼ inch thick. Cut the slices into pieces about 2 by 2 inches. They don't have to be perfect squares--leave the rounded edges. They should be just the right size to accommodate a nasturtium filled with guacamole. Squeeze a little lime juice over the jicama slices.

At this point, the guacamole, jicama, and nasturtiums can be kept for a few hours in the refrigerator, if necessary. To assemble the appetizers, hold the nasturtiums at the base and use a teaspoon to fill them carefully with the guacamole. Set the filled nasturtium on a slice of jicama and arrange on a serving platter. The prepared appetizers can be kept very briefly in the refrigerator or served immediately. (Flowers in the Kitchen)

Chilled Peanut and Nasturtium Soup
10 oz hot water
4 tsp Marmite
4 oz roasted peanuts
3 or 4 nasturtium leaves, chopped roughly
salt to taste
25 oz milk
nasturtium flowers

Pout the hot water onto the Marmite and stir until dissolved, making a broth. Place the peanuts, 8 oz of the broth, the nasturtium leaves and the salt together in a blender and purée until smooth. Empty the peanut mixture into a saucepan, stir in the rest of the broth and milk, simmer for 10 minutes, then chill. Float a nasturtium flower on each serving. (Herbs for all Seasons)

Pickled Nasturtium Seeds
½ pint white vinegar
1 Tbsp salt
3 peppercorns
1 bay leaf
8 oz nasturtium seeds

Put the vinegar in a pan with the salt, peppercorns and bay leaf. Bring to the boil and
simmer for 30 minutes. Take off the heat and add the nasturtium seeds. Allow to cool, then bottle in sterile jars. (The Illustrated Book of Herbs)

**Nasturtium-Mushroom Salad**

2 cups sliced raw mushrooms  
1/2 cup chopped nasturtium flowers  
4 cups mixed greens (Boston lettuce, watercress, chicory, endive)  
French dressing

Prepare mushrooms and nasturtiums. Line a salad bowl with crisp mixed greens, add the mushrooms and nasturtiums and a good French dressing and toss and serve. (The Forgotten Art of Flower Cookery)

**Gold and Lavender Cups**

2 tablespoons minced nasturtium flowers  
1 Tbsp chive blossoms, pulled from the stems  
1 tsp poppy seeds  
3/4 cup low-fat cottage cheese  
scant 1/8 tsp crushed lavender blossoms  
18 dozen nasturtium blossoms, rinsed and debugged

Combine all ingredients, except nasturtium blossoms. Carefully stuff blossoms with cheese mixture. Arrange on a platter covered with nasturtium leaves and garnish with whole chive blossoms. (Sage Cottage Herb Garden Cookbook)

**Broccoli and Swiss Cheese Loaf with Nasturtium Blossoms**

1 1/2 lb broccoli, trimmed of coarse stems and steamed  
2 eggs, beaten  
4 oz Swiss cheese, grated  
1/2 cup crème fraiche  
1/2 tsp black pepper  
1/4 cup grated onions  
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg  
pinch of cayenne pepper  
1/4 cup finely chopped almonds, toasted  
3 nasturtium blossoms, coarsely cut

Preheat oven to 350F. Butter an 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 inch loaf pan. In a food processor, puree broccoli. Turn broccoli into a large bowl. Add all the remaining ingredients, and mix very well. Spoon into prepared pan, and set loaf in a larger pan, adding 1 inch of boiling water to the larger pan. Cover top of loaf pan loosely with aluminum foil, and bake for 1 hour. Let stand for 15 minutes. Then loosen edges, and invert onto a serving dish. Garnish with additional nasturtium blossoms if you wish. (The Herb & Spice Cookbook--A Seasoning Celebration)

**Pumpkin, Tomato, Onion and Nasturtium Bake**

1-2 Tbsp sunflower oil  
1 lb pumpkin, peeled, deseeded and sliced  
2 onions, finely chopped  
2 large tomatoes, skinned and sliced  
3 Tbsp nasturtiums  
salt and pepper  
large pinch ground allspice

Heat the oven to 350F. Lightly oil a shallow ovenproof dish and set aside. Heat the remaining oil in a frying pan, put in the pumpkin slices and fry gently for 3-4 minutes until lightly browned. With a slotted spoon, transfer the pumpkin to the prepared dish. Put the onions in the frying pan and cook for about 2 minutes until soft but not brown. Add the sliced tomatoes and cook for 1 minute. Place the onions and tomatoes in the dish with the pumpkin, add the nasturtiums, season and sprinkle with allspice. Bake in the oven for about 30 minutes and serve hot. (Cooking with Flowers)

**Raspberry and Nasturtium Salad**

1 cup heavy cream  
2 cups sour cream or plain yogurt  
1 cup raspberry vinegar  
3 Tbsp confectioner's sugar  
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint or 2 tsp dried  
3 pints fresh raspberries  
24 nasturtium flowers

In a chilled metal bowl, whisk the heavy cream until whisk leaves tracks in cream. Add sour cream or yogurt and continue to whisk until smooth. Add vinegar while whisking; add sugar and blend until smooth. Stir in mint. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours. When ready to serve, whisk mixture to blend. On a dessert plate, place raspberries in center
and arrange nasturtiums around fruit. Dribble dressing over berries and flowers. Makes 6-8 servings. (Guide to Cooking with Edible Flowers)

**Potato Salad with Nasturtium Leaves**

1 ½ lbs small unpeeled new potatoes
½ cup finely chopped scallions
1/3 cup finely diced celery
1 carrot, shredded
¼ cup finely minced fresh parsley
5 nasturtium leaves, finely minced
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
1/3 cup mayonnaise
2 heaping Tbsp sour cream
freshly ground black pepper, to taste
leaf lettuce
1 hard-boiled egg, peeled and quartered
2 Tbsp finely minced fresh chives

Place potatoes into a medium-size saucepan and add enough water to cover. Bring water to a boil, lower heat, and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain, and cool just enough so that you can peel and quarter them. While potatoes are still warm, combine with scallions, celery, carrots, parsley, and nasturtium leaves in a large bowl. Toss with vinegar while still warm, and let stand at room temperature for 20 minutes. In a cup, mix mayonnaise, sour cream, and pepper together, and toss with potato mixture. Chill in refrigerator for 2-3 hours before serving. Line a serving bowl with leaf lettuce, spoon salad into the center, garnish with egg quarters, and sprinkle with chives. (The Herb & Spice Cookbook; A Seasoning Celebration)

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