Parsley is far more than just a decorative sprig gracing your dinner plate. A mild diuretic, it can be used to treat a number of ailments, including bad breath and the common cold.

Packed with nutrients, parsley (Petroselinum sativum) is a great source of dietary calcium, iron, vitamin C, and vitamin A, as well as beta-carotene and folic acids.

Native to the Mediterranean region, this crisp green herb has been used for thousands of years as a healer, seasoning, and a breath freshener. Parsley was valued for its medicinal purposes long before it started appearing on plates. In ancient Greece, it was considered to be so sacred that it was used to adorn tombs.

"That parsley sprig may save your social life, so don’t leave it behind on your plate."

Health benefits
Parsley has proved itself to be a potent medicinal herb. It has cancer-fighting volatile oil components including myristicin, limonene, eugenol, and alpha-thujene. Parsley is also rich in flavonoids with powerful antioxidant properties including apiin, apigenin, crisoeriol, and luteolin.

It is known to both detoxify and soothe the kidneys. Parsley’s roots and leaves have uterine tonic action and can be used to treat a variety of menstrual complaints, including lack of or painful periods. It has been officially recognized in both British and US Pharmacopoeias and Codex for well over 100 years as aiding in regulating menstrual complaints.

In addition, parsley is a mild laxative, helps to lower blood pressure, and acts as an antimicrobial for a large array of organisms. The root is known to be especially helpful in preventing the formation of gallstones.

That parsley sprig may save your social life, so don’t leave it behind on your plate.

Eating the leaves will reduce the odour of garlic, not only on the breath but also secreting from the sweat glands.

How to take parsley
According to the first edition of the Physicians’ Desk Reference for Herbal Medicine (1998), parsley’s seeds have traditionally been made into a tea and used as a remedy for colic, indigestion, and intestinal gas.

Parsley leaves can be added to tea as a gentle treatment for kidney problems, bladder infections, and to reduce mucus in the first stages of a cold and influenza. Ideal for children and adults alike, the tea comprises one teaspoon of parsley leaves and one teaspoon of raspberry leaves steeped in one cup of boiled water for five to 10 minutes.

It can also be taken as a tincture (1/2 to one teaspoon, two
times daily) or as a fresh juice (50 grams often mixed with other juices such as carrot).

Parsley leaves can be ground into a paste, mixed with water, and used on the skin to treat stings and insect bites.

**Cautions**
The leaves and root have been used for centuries and are quite safe for most people. However, parsley root is discouraged during pregnancy because a strong decoction of the root has been known to cause miscarriages. One of parsley's primary constituents, myristicin, may also increase the heart rate of the fetus. If you are taking lithium, only take parsley under doctor's supervision.

Parsley is a great nutrient that can add a kick to any salad, soup, or savoury dish and simultaneously act as an all-round natural healer.

“Parsley can be used in a gentle tea to reduce mucus in the first stage of a cold and influenza.”

Terry Willard, CTI, PhD, is a practitioner, teacher, director of the Wild Rose College of Natural Healing in Calgary, and author of Mind-Body Harmony (Key Porter, 2003).