



# Thymely Bits

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**'Tis the Season...**for celebrations, family get-togethers and traditions. Friendship, food, gifts, candles and herbs are core elements in many of these holiday events.

**Featured Herb – Sage (Salvia)** How boring holiday meals would be without sage! It is a culinary must for the stuffing used in a turkey or goose but its virtues go far beyond flavoring. There are over 900 varieties of Salvia but common garden sage (Salvia officinalis) is most often used for culinary purposes.

**Growing:** Sage is easy to grow from seed but seeds are not viable for more than a year, so always use fresh seeds each season. Sage can also be bought as individual plants or can be propagated by dividing a mature plant. Always plant sage in full sun in well-drained soil. Sage plants are well behaved, bushy herbs making them an excellent choice for hedges or borders.

Sage grows well with rosemary, marjoram, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots and tomatoes but does not grow well with onions, rue and cucumbers. Sage repels flies, cabbage moths and carrot flies and attracts bees.

**Maintenance:** Regular harvesting of leaves and an annual early spring pruning will help the plant stay robust. Cut the plant down to about six inches in the spring. After four or five years sage may become woody and need replacing. Young plants need sufficient water but in established plants too much moisture can cause mildew and root rot. Sage will go dormant during periods of intense heat but will rally back with cooler

weather. Garden sage is very hardy and the flavor of the leaves will actually improve after a frost. Sage leaves can be dried easily.

**History/Mythology:** The Chinese so valued sage that in the 17th century they would trade three chests of China tea for one of sage leaves. Sages have been used in sacred rituals for thousands of years. In North America many native people burned bundles of dried sage and cedar to cleanse a troubled environment. Today sage smudges are symbolically used to purify a home. In the Middle Ages people believed sage prolonged life, lifted spirits, repelled toads and enabled maidens to see their future husbands.

**Culinary:** Sage is excellent with pork, goose, turkey, duck and oily fish. And it is a must for pea and bean soups and poultry stuffing. Sage is a very strong natural preservative and has generous amounts of vitamins A and C.

**Cosmetic:** Rubbing sage leaves on your teeth will help whiten them and slowly chewing a sage leaf can help eliminate bad breath. Sage has been long used as a hair rinse to prevent graying and aids in dandruff control. Sage stimulates the skin and is a good addition to a bath. Our **Prairie Sage** soap contains both sage leaves and 100% pure essential oil of Clary Sage– providing an herbal aroma and stimulating cleansing action.

**Household:** Burn dried sages leaves to freshen and purify your home and environment. Add sage to vinegar for household cleaning because it inhibits growth of bacteria and fungi.

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