



Letter from the Publisher

Amanda Klenner

*He bore a simple wild-flower wreath:
Narcissus, and the sweet brier rose;
Vervain, and flexile thyme, that breathe
Rich fragrance; modest heath, that glows
With purple bells; the amaranth bright,
That no decay, nor fading knows,
Like true love's holiest, rarest light;
And every purest flower, that blows
In that sweet time, which Love most blesses,
When spring on summer's confines presses.*

~ Thomas Love Peacock

Thyme is a well-known culinary herb that has been used in both food and medicine for thousands of years. It has been said that when eaten, thyme can help prevent or cure the effects of poison; the smoke is used to invigorate and strengthen the spirit for battle; a sprig is used as a sign of respect and courage; and teas and poultices were used as remedies for The Plague. There is no way, even in an entire book, that we could cover all the ways over the years that thyme has been used in food and medicine. Out of my top 20 **herbals, only three didn't mention thyme in their materia medica. It is thyme** to dig deep into this traditional herb, and learn more about its uses.

Interestingly, even with such a significant history of use, thyme is often reduced in herbals as an antimicrobial with an affinity for the lungs. Some also refer to its use as a carminative, helping to disperse gas in the intestines, and relieve bloating. As is usually the case, there is so much more to this wonderful herb than that.

In this issue, you will probably find more information that any normal person **would want to know about thyme. Good thing many of us plant lovers aren't** all that normal! The good news is, we do take the time to get to know the herbs we love on a deep level, and we hope this issue will have you ready to deepen your relationship with this beautiful, aromatic plant ally.

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Thyme Monograph

Amanda Klenner

Thyme is an ancient herb with many practical uses. Though it has been used in herbal medicine for thousands of years, it gained its popularity as an antimicrobial during the Black Plague. Thyme has been used traditionally as a strewing herb, thrown on the floor to freshen the air, along with other aromatic herbs. Not only did it hide the body odor of the people in the house, it also helped clear bacteria and viruses from the air and improve respiratory system health.

When the Black Plague began sweeping across Europe, people made remedies meant to prevent and treat it. Out of this came the

Four Thieves Vinegar, a blend of antimicrobial herbs used by thieves robbing the homes of plague victims to keep from contracting it themselves. Somehow, most thieves did indeed avoid the disease, while two-thirds of the general population was dying. Some would also bind thyme, along with many of the same herbs used in the vinegar blend, **to smell so they wouldn't smell the disease. People** who used aromatic, antimicrobial herbs seemed less likely to get sick than those who did not.

In modern times, we often don't think of thyme as a medicinal herb—instead we think of it as a seasoning. Many people have a jar of thyme in their herb cupboard for flavoring savory vegetables, fish, and heavy meats. It is a great seasoning herb because it is versatile, deliciously aromatic, and it improves digestion, especially of fatty foods.

I love working with kitchen herbs for medicinal purposes, especially **when I'm working with newcomers to plant medicine.** Where they may feel the need to Google **echinacea and make sure it's** safe, I can easily suggest a steam with thyme and rosemary to open up congested lungs—these are herbs that nearly everyone recognizes as friendly and safe. Kitchen herbs are the best herbal gateway for **those just getting started, and I can't wait to share more** about this useful plant!

Latin name: *Thymus vulgaris*

Other common names: common thyme, English thyme, garden thyme, rubbed thyme, tomillo (Spanish), cimbru (Romania)

Family: Lamiaceae

Geographical distribution: native to the Mediterranean, southern Italy, and southern Europe, but now growing in gardens across the world

Botanical description: Thyme is a perennial herb from the mint family. It has a woody, fibrous root. The stems are square, and there are many of them! They are hard, branched, and 4–8 inches high. The leaves are small, narrow, lanceolate, and simple with entire margins. The color can range from green to gray, with reds and purples showing in the fall after a few freezes. The flowers appear at the terminal end of the branches in whorls, and are usually white, but can also be light purple or blue. Thyme flowers from spring through late summer. The leaves and flowers are very fragrant, with the primary constituent being thymol.

Parts used: leaf and flower

Herbal actions: antimicrobial, antispasmodic, aromatic, analgesic (topically), astringent, carminative, bronchodilator, expectorant, anticancer

Energetics: warming and drying

Constituents: flavonoids (apigenin, luteolin), volatile oils (thymol, carvacrol, methyl chavicol, cineol, and borneol primarily), saponins, bitter alkaloids, terpenes, tannins, resins

Essential Oil: *Thymol chemotype*: Thymol, p-Cymene, Carvacrol, Gamma-Terpinene, B-Caryophyllene, Linalool, a-Pinene, a-Terpinene. *Linalool chemotype*: Linalool, Linalyl acetate, a-Terpineol+borneol, Thumo, p-Cymene, B-Caryophyllene, Camphene, Carvacrol, B-Mycrene.



Thyme's Health Benefits and Uses

Antimicrobial

Thyme has been shown to be useful against a plethora of microbes, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and yeast. This makes sense, since traditional use of thyme is often for respiratory and digestive infections, and as a general antimicrobial. Many studies have been done on the antimicrobial properties of thyme both as an essential oil, and as an aqueous extract. Not many ethanolic, or alcohol extracts have been studied, but alcohol does retain a lot of the volatile oils, so I would expect (and have personally experienced) tinctures to be just as effective antimicrobials as essential oil or tea. I do prefer to use the alcohol extracts instead of the essential oil, to avoid the skin sensitivity so often seen with essential oil use, due to its high concentration of thymol. Furthermore, steams and teas

are more appropriate for those who are sensitive to essential oils, along with children and the elderly.

Thyme has been shown to be effective against the following: *Staphylococcus aureus*,^{3,10} *Salmonella typhimurium*,^{3,10} *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*,^{3,10} *E. coli*,^{3,10} *Klebsiella pneumonia*,^{3,10} *Enterococcus faecalis*,^{3,10} *Streptococcus spp.*,^{8,10} *Candida albicans*,^{3,4,7} *Aspergillus niger*,⁴ *Cryptococcus neoformans var. neoformans*,⁴ and *Listeria monocytogenes*.⁴

Studies have shown thyme to be most effective in a dose-dependent way, meaning more frequent doses of the tea (aqueous extract) and essential oils (1.3% dilution in oil) are more effective than a single dose. So, next time you have a cold, or candida, or SIBO, or any other infection you are trying to fight, drink thyme tea three or four times a day, or diffuse the essential oil two to three times a day for 20 minutes at a time.

Not only is thyme effective against many forms of microbes, but the essential oil (specifically thymol) has been shown to be as effective as DEET for repelling mosquitos,⁶ without the negative health impact.

Antispasmodic & Astringent

Thyme works as a specific antispasmodic for the digestive and respiratory systems. It is helpful for those with catarrh, asthma, whooping cough,⁹ and persistent coughing (especially associated with upper respiratory infections), flatulence, and digestive spasms (diarrhea and vomiting). It eases smooth muscle spasms, so that when we do cough **or digest, everything isn't so irritated that the body is trying to forcefully remove the irritant.** Instead, it helps the

body have more willful and productive coughs and stools, so it can efficiently and less traumatically remove irritations.

Teas, vinegars, and tinctures (but not essential oil) made with thyme work also as astringents, helping to tone and tighten tissues, an action much needed for both respiratory congestion and loose stools. This works synergistically, mitigating the microbes causing the irritation, toning and tightening tissues, and reducing swelling and dampness in the area, thereby helping the body more efficiently treat the symptoms.

Carminative

Thyme is a parasympathetic relaxant,⁸ meaning it helps relax the mind and bring the body into rest-and-digest mode. Many times, we eat something that perhaps doesn't **sit well** and causes gas, indigestion, or heartburn. This often happens with people who have cold, stagnant, damp digestion, which may be characterized by constipation or loose, floating, cloudy stools. Thyme works as a digestive stimulant, aiding in the breakdown of foods, and is a traditional remedy for gas (a carminative). For carminative purposes, a tea or tincture is best. Lemon thyme (*Thymus x citriodorus*) works well here, and is much better tasting than common thyme, but it does offer less antimicrobial action.

Not directly connected to its carminative properties, but still related, thyme is also used to improve nutrient uptake in convalescence.⁸

Expectorant & Bronchodilator

Thyme has traditional use as an expectorant, and **it's known** to help open up the lungs to improve breathing. Thyme tea, thanks to its aromatic quality, helps to relieve congestion, thin the mucous, open

the bronchioles, and remove mucous from the respiratory system. An herbal steam, steam tent, or even diffusing the essential oil in a humidifier or diffuser are also great delivery systems. This is especially helpful for those with persistent, irritating, inflammatory coughing with significant amounts of mucous. It has been used effectively against the common cold, flu, whooping cough, asthma, bronchitis, and many other mucousy respiratory conditions.

Anti-Cancer

Thyme is not typically thought of as an herb that can prevent or treat certain types of cancer, but while sloughing through research, I have found more than a few studies of the efficacy of thyme against certain lines of cancer cells.

Note: These studies are done on cell lines outside of a living organism (*in vitro*), and not on a whole living organism (*in vivo*), meaning thyme might not be effective on its own against these types of cancer, but it is certainly worth incorporating as a preventative. It may even be good for use during treatment if the oncologist allows. (Always check with your doctor on herbal therapies during medical treatments!)

Thyme essential oil of the thymol, thujanol, and linalool chemotypes were shown in an *in vivo* study, to decrease cell proliferation in certain lines of breast and cervical cancer by 20%.¹² Another study showed that thyme essential oil stops the transcription of cancer DNA in human oral cavity squamous cell carcinoma.¹⁴ It has also been shown effective, *in vivo*, against Leukemia¹⁵ and colorectal cancer.¹⁶ The antioxidant capabilities also protect healthy cells from oxidative damage.¹⁷

Interestingly, it has not only been shown to induce cell death (apoptosis) in cancer lines, it has also been shown to damage sperm, and decrease sperm motility in human spermatozoa,¹³ meaning if a man has a slow sperm count, perhaps he should avoid large doses of thyme internally, until more studies are done on this subject.

Flower Essence

Thyme flower essence is often used to help those who have dissonance with time, and those working on past emotional traumas. It helps to soothe the unconscious mind, especially for those who constantly have stress induced dreams, which are hard to remember once the person is fully awake. It brings about a sense



of connection to the natural world and the earth, as well as a sense of inner peace, and balance between our life and our spiritual. It helps us find inner peace and strength, and move toward our life purpose. It is also used to balance the energy centers, or chakras, of the body.

Essential Oil (EO)

Thyme essential oils come in seven different chemotypes, thymol and linalool being the most commonly found and used. Thymol is the chemotype that is most often associated with the antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory qualities of thyme, and linalool is used more frequently as a safer, milder version, more easily used around

children and pets. (It should be noted that thyme essential oil **isn't** recommended for use directly on pets, or around cats at all, as it can be toxic to felines).

Thyme essential oil is herby and pungent, and it is used as an antifungal, antibiotic, and antiviral. The aroma also helps to relax the nervous system, reduce stress, and bring on restful sleep, concentration, strength, and vitality. It affects the immune, nervous, and respiratory systems.

Diffusing the oil is recommended for respiratory infections, and as a general antimicrobial. It blends well with lemon, tea tree oil, lavender, eucalyptus, cinnamon, cypress, peppermint, and frankincense.

Thyme EO can be used topically with a 1.3% dilution ratio—this excludes any mucous membranes or sensitive skin, which should not be in contact with thyme oil at all. It should never be used neat (undiluted), as it can cause skin irritation and burning. Correctly diluted, however, it can be a helpful antispasmodic and anti-inflammatory, easing sore muscles, aches, pains, and strains. Many use it for arthritis, back pain, gout, inflammation, and swelling.

Emotionally, thyme promotes physical and mental strength and relief of mental fatigue, depression, anger, and frustration. It can also improve memory (especially blended with rosemary), reduce nervous exhaustion, and support physical recovery after a long illness or protracted period of stress. It can also improve self-esteem and confidence in those who are down and out.



Using Thyme Safely

Herb

Not safe in medicinal doses for pregnant women, though fine for seasoning food. Avoid medical doses of teas, tinctures or vinegars if you are on any medication for a blood clotting disorder.

Essential Oil

Thyme essential oil (thymol chemotype) is not recommended for use around or on pregnant women. It may cause mucous membrane irritation and is recommended to be diluted at 1.3%. It can interact with blood clotting and is not recommended for those with blood clotting disorders, and may interact with anticoagulant medications.¹ Linalool chemotype is less often used but considered much safer, especially around children, the elderly, and pregnant mothers.² It is preferred in aromatherapy. It may also inhibit blood clotting, and should also not be used for those who have blood clotting disorders or who are on anticoagulant medications.

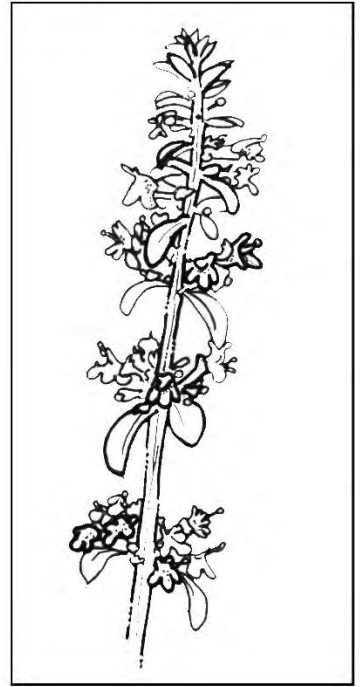
Dosage

Tincture: 15–20 drops, 2–3 times a day

Vinegar Infusion: ½ oz diluted in water 2–3 times a day

Infusion (tea): 2–3 cups per day, steeped for 5–10 minutes. Strain, sweeten as desired, and enjoy.

Essential oil: 1.3% dilution in a carrier oil, applied 2–3 times a day or diffused through a diffuser for 20 minutes 2–3 times a day.



THYME
THYMUS VULGARIS



Thyme: Powerful Herbal Medicine

Carol Little, R.H.

This much-loved culinary herb for centuries is also a powerful herbal medicine ally! Its medicine is an important part of my apothecary and has a wide variety of uses. Do you love thyme? I do. I never seem to be able to grow enough!

Thyme is a proud member of the mint family, and there are over 350 known thyme species. It can vary from low-growth to quite bushy and exhibit anything from pale green to olive, silver, or even bronze, as well as deep, dark greens.

Nutritional Profile

It's a rich source of several essential vitamins, such as A, E, C, K, B-complex, and folic acid, and it is also one of the best sources of calcium, iron, manganese, selenium, and potassium.

It has some of the highest antioxidant levels in the herbal community. Packed with bioflavonoids such as lutein, zeaxanthin, and naringenin, all of which are known to be excellent helpers for the elimination of free-radicals in the body.

Medicine Uses

The following are my favorite ways to use thyme medicinally. As Amanda discussed in the monograph, we can use thyme medicine for digestive system conditions such as bloating, cramping, gas, indigestion, and various inflammatory conditions. It stimulates the entire system with a focus on the stomach and small intestine, and can aid especially in the digestion of rich or fatty foods.

In addition to its respiratory applications mentioned in the monograph—supporting recovery from coughs, bronchitis, and chest colds—it can also be very helpful with asthma and related symptoms. Besides being an extraordinary expectorant and relaxant, it is secretolytic (encouraging the clearing of mucus). Thyme gives us what we need when it comes to expectorant action, **and it's my go-to** in so many cases.

You've already read that thyme is antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral. Specifically, I have found it can be helpful in cases of athlete's foot, candida, and ringworm. In recent years, it has become an important part of Lyme-disease protocols among several notable herbalists. I also recommend clients take some thyme at

the first signs of a cold, when they start to notice that feeling they might be getting sick. We can brew a quick and easy herbal tea for this purpose. I love to include an organic lemon. Or, a tincture can work so well in combination with other supportive herbs.

Thyme medicine (essential oil aside) is quite mild in terms of toxicity, **so it's a good choice for fighting worms in children, where it works well combined with a more bitter anti-worm herb like wormwood.**

At home and in my herbal practice, I use thyme in tincture form, as a tea, infused in honey, and in a delicious syrup. Here are a few of my recipes.



Thyme Tea with Lemon

This is one of my favorite ways to enjoy thyme in a warming tea.

Ingredients and Supplies

- a few sprigs of thyme leaves (fresh if possible)
- one lemon (organic if possible)
- honey (optional)
- heat-proof glass jar

Directions

1. Put the thyme into a glass jar.
2. Cover with just-boiled water.
3. Allow to steep for 8–10 minutes.
4. Add a teaspoon or 2 of lemon juice.
5. Strain into a cup or mug.
6. Add a teaspoon of plain or infused honey if desired. (See recipe below.)

Thyme-Infused Honey

This infused honey can be added to thyme tea to enhance its medicinal and flavor profile, taken on its own right off the spoon, or even drizzled on a biscuit or toast! Since honey is antimicrobial too, **it pairs perfectly with thyme's medicinal properties.** The recipe here makes a little less than a pint, but it can obviously be scaled up or down to make more or less.



Ingredients and Supplies

- 1 pint raw honey
- 1 C thyme leaves
- two 1-pint glass canning jars with airtight lids

Directions

1. Fill the jar halfway (loosely) with thyme leaves.
2. Add honey to fill the jar and stir to make sure the plant material is coated.
3. Cover and store in a cool place.
4. Let sit for at least two weeks and then strain it through a cheese cloth into the second jar. You can heat the honey a little bit to make it easier to strain, but be careful not to let it get above 115°F or so.
5. Enjoy as you wish!

Thyme Tincture for the Home Herbalist

This is a pretty basic, single-herb tincture; and every herbalist finds a slightly different way they prefer to make tinctures; but this my way, and it should give you a good place to start from. There are many ways to make a tincture and lots of schools of thought regarding the type of alcohol to use and best percentages for given herbs.

The liquid **you use to extract a plant's medicine is called the *menstruum***, and it is often as simple as grain alcohol, vodka, or brandy. My original herb teacher and mentor, Rosemary Gladstar always taught us to use good-quality vodka, **and that's my choice** normally. (I use 80-proof for this.) The recipe makes just under a quart of tincture, but again, it can obviously be scaled up or down.

Ingredients and Supplies

- two 1-quart glass canning jars with airtight lids
- enough fresh thyme leaves to fill the jar to the neck
- your choice of menstruum
- 1-quart amber glass jar

Directions

1. Chop the fresh thyme leaves and place them in the jar.
2. Label the jar with the plant name and date.
3. Fill the jar with your chosen menstruum, ensuring that the herb material is completely covered.
4. Take a chopstick or non-metallic object like a wooden spoon and gently poke the plant material, allowing any trapped air bubbles to release.
5. Cover and then shake the jar. See if the plant material is still covered with the liquid. If needed, add more menstruum.
6. Store the jar out of direct sunlight, perhaps in a cupboard, and shake daily. Try to shake twice a day if possible.
7. I like to keep the herbs soaking in the menstruum for a month (over one full moon).
8. Place a few layers of cheesecloth over the mouth of the jar and pour the contents into a clean glass receptacle. I use a Pyrex measuring cup (4 cup size).
9. Squeeze the cheesecloth with the plant material in it to release as much of the liquid into the measuring cup as possible.
10. Pour the tincture into a clean jar with lid. Cover and allow to sit a day or two.

11. We want to filter the remaining bits of plant material out of the liquid. I use unbleached coffee filters to strain again, into the clean measuring cup.
12. **Once it's strained again, pour the tincture** into an amber glass jar for best shelf life. A funnel is helpful here.
13. Label the amber jar with plant info, date, plus menstruum used.

Thyme Syrup

Herbal syrups are easy to make. Essentially, we make a strong tea and simmer it to reduce the liquid, enhancing the strength of the tea. This is called a decoction. We add honey, **and there's our syrup.** This is especially for coughs!

Ingredients and Supplies

- 1 small pot
- 1-pint glass canning jar
- about 2 C pure water
- small bunch of thyme
- honey
- 3–5 slices ginger root (optional 3-5)
- ½ lemon, sliced (optional, organic if possible)

Directions

1. Add the thyme and water to the pot.
2. Bring the water to a quick boil and then simmer.
3. If using ginger root and lemon slices, add them to the simmering liquid.
4. Simmer for 10–15 minutes, or until there is approximately 1 cup of water remaining in the pot.

5. Remove from the heat.
6. When the liquid has cooled slightly, strain out the solids and reserve the decoction.
7. Pour ½ cup of raw honey into your jar and add the decoction.
8. Stir to mix, and breathe in that glorious healing aroma!
9. Cap the jar and label it.
10. Store the syrup in the fridge and use within 6 months.

Thyme is a powerful medicinal plant ally. Make yourself some thyme **medicine and be ready for winter! Don't forget the delights** of thyme in the kitchen too. This amazing plant, so often overlooked, is truly an important participant in my winter herbal medicine chest. Green blessings and good wishes, always, for best health!



Historical and Folk Uses of Thyme

Stephany Hoffelt

There is so much information in the history books about thyme, that it is hard to wrangle it all into a single article. For the purposes of being entertaining, I tried to briefly cover some of the lesser-known uses of the herb.

Researching thyme can be a challenge due to different spellings and types. You might see it written as *tyme* or *time*. Dioscorides mentions two types that were grown in gardens. He called the mild creeping type, which you may also see called wild thyme, *serbyllum* and said it was “used for making wreaths of the head.”¹ He also mentions a second type of cultivated thyme, which he calls *zygis*.

Zygis sounds more to me like modern garden thyme due to its upright growth and the fact that it is stronger and hotter than creeping thyme.

If you go poking through old manuscripts, you may also want to know that thyme dodder refers to *Cuscuta epithymum*, a parasitic botanical that grows on thyme or red clover. You may also see this plant referred to as dodder of thyme.

Culinary Thyme

Thyme is mostly thought of as a culinary herb these days. It has been written of in cookbooks since ancient times. It was included in recipes for flavor, but I think also for the health benefits it conveys. It was used sparingly and incorporated into blends due to its strong flavor, but it was often listed as a plant that could be eaten every day, if cooked.²

The Roman chef, Apicius included thyme in his spiced salt recipe **which he said was to be “used against indigestion, to move the bowels, against all illness, against pestilence as well as for the prevention of colds.”**³ It seems popular these days to call these types of blends **“finishing salts.”**

It was also a common ingredient in a popular medieval condiment called green sauce, a vinaigrette made from various greens to be poured over meat. Historically, it was probably to hide the fact that the meat was a bit old, but it is a tasty delivery mechanism of fresh, leafy greens. You can blend the following ingredients with an immersion blender and store the sauce in the fridge. My boys like it on sub sandwiches.

Medieval Green Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 C mild greens such as spinach or chard
- ¼ C chopped chives or garlic scapes
- ½ C fresh Italian parsley
- ¼ C fresh thyme
- ¼ C fresh mint
- salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ C wine vinegar
- ¼ C extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

Combine all ingredients and pound well into a sauce-like texture. Alternatively, place all ingredients into a food processor and blend until everything is fully incorporated. Use on meats or hearty vegetables.

Thyme is one of the spices incorporated into *Tarahana*, which is a Turkish grain-based lactic-acid fermentation.⁴ It was included in many fermented recipes and, **although they don't say so, I would** imagine it helped to keep nasty beasties from infecting the ferments.

Thyme for Courtship

Creeping thyme was an herb ruled by Venus and therefore is associated love and courtship. My favorite folk song is a play on the word **thyme** and while it's a tad long, I thought including the lyrics might make a few readers smile.



Let No Man Steal Your Thyme⁵

*Come all you fair and tender girls,
That flourish in your prime;
Beware, beware, keep your garden fair,
Let no man steal your thyme,
Let no man steal your thyme.*

*For when your thyme is past and gone,
He'll care no more for you;
And in the place where your thyme was raised,
'Twill all spread o'er with rue,
'Twill all spread o'er with rue.*

*A woman is a branchy tree,
And man's a clinging vine;
And from her branches carelessly
He'll take what he can find,
He'll take what he can find.*

Some scholars claim this song speaks to these herbs uses as abortifacients, but I think that is a bit of a stretch, as I discuss below. The song became popular during the Victorian age when thyme symbolized spontaneous emotions and rue symbolized

regret.¹⁴ The moral of the song is more likely that we will come to regret spontaneous love affairs with roguish young men.

On the other hand, young women who were interested in finding their true love were told to dry and powder marigold flowers, a sprig of marjoram, thyme, and a little wormwood on October 18th, and then simmer them in a bit of oxymel. After this had congealed a bit, they were told to anoint themselves with the liquid and repeat the following phrase three times:

*St Luke, St. Luke, be kind to me,
In dream let me my true love see.*⁶

Young women would also tuck a sprig of thyme in their hair to make themselves irresistible to suitors (or perhaps to give suitors the courage to approach them).⁷ Once they had secured a husband, women were not done with thyme. As the herb symbolized knightly courage, their wives would embroider a bee tending a sprig of **thyme on their knight's scarf, sending the "gentle hint that those who would enjoy the sweets of love should not neglect the constant attentions which it demands."**⁸ Dioscorides tells us serbyllum was, "used for making wreaths of the head"⁹ and later stories seem to indicate thyme garlands were to be given loved ones.⁶

More Thyme Lore

Many writers waxed poetic about sweet smelling fields of wild thyme. Thyme-covered meadows were said to be a favorite of many Fair Folk. **Shakespeare's Oberon was fond of:**

*a bank whereon the Wild Thyme blows,
Where Oxlips and the woody Violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with lush Woodbine.
With sweet Musk-Roses, and with Eglantine.*¹⁰

The stories also told of more frightening creatures drawn to the aromatic fields. In German tales, the Adder-Princess, a great white snake who wore a shining golden crown, was said to live near a red rock nested in a field of wild thyme. In Sicily, the stories seemed to merge and the belief became that fairies disguised as serpents would hide in the thyme.¹¹

In the Baltics, where thyme originated, it is considered a magical herb. In the tale *The Singing Sword*, the evil wizard strews rowan-leaves, thyme, and fern over the sword to win its allegiance from the hero Kalevide. In the *Fairie Queen*, written by Edward Spenser, the protagonist Duessa bathes in oregano and thyme, presumably to hide her true form.

Conversely, the Anglo Saxons felt it was a protective herb that repelled evil, as is explained in this excerpt from a one of their charms used against various poisons.

*Thyme and Fennel, an exceeding mighty two,
These herbs the wise Lord created,
Holy in heaven, while hanging.
He laid and placed them in the seven worlds,
As a help for the poor and the rich alike.
It stands against pain, it fights against poison,
It is potent against three and against thirty,
Against a demon's hand, and against sudden guile,
Against enchantment by vile creatures.”¹²*

Burning Thyme

Thyme was frequently burnt due to its aromatic nature. Pliny mentioned that burning thyme would “put to flight all venomous creatures.” During *L’ánsa’ra*, a Muslim holiday celebrating

Midsummer, it was burnt in communal bonfires. Bundles of thyme and other aromatic herbs were taken from the fire and used as fumigants to purify the home.

Thyme was also burnt medicinally. In the *Trotula*, fumigating a room with thyme was mentioned for treating dysentery caused by phlegm,¹³ which leads us to a conversation of some of the lesser known medicinal uses of thyme.

Dioscorides' Thymoxalme

Thymoxalme was one name given to a medicinal vinegar that **Dioscorides recommended. It was thought to “extract thick black fluids,” which the Greeks called “the melancholic humor,”** which is most likely why the herb was thought to lift the spirits of men by driving away melancholy.¹⁴

They believed that excess accumulation of this humor led to many problems, but Dioscorides specifically mentioned this preparation as being useful for those suffering from bloating, gout, and arthritis.¹⁵ **He also recommended it for people with “weak stomachs,” which I didn’t understand until later when I saw Avicenna recommend a similar preparation for nausea due to sea-sickness.¹⁶ I’ve used it successfully for many types of nausea, but it is not for use in pregnancy!**

To make this preparation, begin by pounding an *acetabulum* of both salt and fresh thyme until the herb is finely ground. An *acetabulum* is a Roman unit of measurement (not a vinegar cup) as some people mistranslate it. Vinegar cups were made to hold an acetabulum, which was approximately 2.4 fluid ounces, so use a liquid measuring glass to determine the right volume of thyme and salt.

After the thyme is ground into the salt well, grind in a tablespoon each of fresh rue and fresh pennyroyal and a tablespoon of fine polenta. Cover it with three pints water and ¼ pint vinegar that contains the mother. Dioscorides says to wrap your jar a linen cloth and set it in the open air for some time. I think the idea here is to let it steep long enough that it brews a bit. I think ten days is sufficient. They administered this preparation diluted in warm water.

Thyme and Midwifery

One interesting belief among **ancient midwives was that mothers' milk could be too thick or too thin and that its quality could be adjusted through regimen.** Thyme seed decoctions were often recommended to thin milk that was too thick.¹⁷ My thinking is that **"thick" milk could be the type that is sometimes manually expressed from plugged ducts.** Midwives also recommended infusions made with, **"anniseed, fennelseed and thyme to warm the womb "too cold to nourish the Seed of Man," and mother of Thyme (creeping thyme) boiled in wine to "further conception."**¹⁸

This advice runs counter to the idea that the herb was an abortifacient, **but that's not surprising to me.** **There** was a period during which ethnobotanists (male ethnobotanists) classified every herb that provoked the menses as abortifacient. As if pregnancy was the only thing that caused irregular menstruation? Some theorize that the intent was to scare women away from self-care, so they would hire physicians, but regardless of their motivation, that body of work needs to be revisited.

Thyme as a Respiratory Herb

Thyme's modern fame as respiratory herb undoubtedly comes from its early uses in purging phlegm due to its hot, drying nature. While I don't want to dive too far into this common use, this is an interesting formula from the 15th century *Al Andalus* cookbook.

Powder to Dry the Lungs

Ingredients

- 1 part fennel seeds
- 1 part peeled liquorice wood
- 1 part *musa'tar*
- 1 part flowers of *halhâl*
- 1 part myrobalan
- 5 part sugar

Musa'tar is thyme, and flowers of *halhâl* are lavender flowers. The identity of the ingredient myrobalan is less clear. The word has been used to refer to many fruits including cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), mirabella plums (*Prunus domestica ssp. Syriaca*), and the three used to make triphala: amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*), bibhitaki (*Terminalia bellirica*), and haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*). My best geographical guess is that this formula refers to one of the first two plants.

The directions translate to: "Pound the medicinal herbs, sift them and add to the sugar, and drink of it at bedtime [mixed with water]. Its advantages: for him who wants to clear his head, and dry the lungs of the moisture of phlegm."¹⁹

Thyme as an Antiseptic

Once “modern” science discovered germ theory and the active constituent thymol, most other uses for thyme were forgotten as thymol is a particularly effective antiseptic. Because most physicians recognized that thyme had an affinity for respiratory tissue, it was most often included in formulas for coughs, colds and sore throats.²⁰

These are just a handful of the interesting uses for thyme that I have discovered when poking around in my history books, and I encourage you to do some research on your own, because I am sure you will find many more interesting stories and forgotten uses!



Thyme for Breathing

Nina Judith Katz

Nicholas Culpepper describes thyme as, “a noble strengthener of the lungs, as notable a one as grows.” My experience confirms this; I recommend it regularly to clients with asthma or bronchitis, and use it for my daughter routinely. In fact, we find it so useful that I would rather run out of time than out of thyme.

Who has not smelled thyme and felt the lungs expand? Breathing in thyme is as useful as that experience suggests. Place a modest handful of it into a large bowl or pot, pour over water just off the boil, cover it, and let it cool down a tad while you locate a large bath towel. Throw most of the towel over your head, remove the cover from the bowl or pot, throw the rest of the towel over it; in

essence, you're creating a large tent with room for both you and the bowl. If the steam is too hot, wait until it cools off enough for comfort, and then try again. Once you know the temperature is right, tuck the end of the towel under the bowl. Come up for air when you need to, and then dive back into your steam bath.

Of course, thyme makes a fine cup of tea or addition to a meal as well, and either one can also serve as a mini-steam bath; if you cook with thyme enough, the air in your kitchen will incorporate it. You can also cup your hands over your tea and lean your face into the opening to make a tiny steam bath. The full-sized one is more effective, however, so for asthma, bronchitis, or a lung infection, go for the bowl. The cup of tea may be adequate for a cold, however.

Thyme Footbath for Asthma or Bronchitis

Thyme is also a superlative herb to use in a footbath for asthma. It expands the lungs while also relaxing the entire person and offering a gentle anti-inflammatory touch. In a footbath, redundancy is useful, so I tend to include other relaxing and anti-inflammatory herbs as well. Oregano and basil are other lung-opening aromatics that I sometimes use, together with or instead of thyme. Chamomile, skullcap, or valerian reinforce the relaxing and anti-inflammatory actions. Epsom salts add further nutritional support. Garlic is also a great supporter of the lungs and makes another good addition.

Ingredients

- one handful thyme
- one handful basil or oregano (optional)
- one handful chamomile or skullcap OR ¼ cup valerian

- three cloves garlic, minced
- one small handful Epsom salts

Directions

1. Place all the ingredients into a bowl or other vessel large enough for your feet.
2. Pour on water just off the boil.
3. Cover and steep for 15 minutes, then uncover to let cool. Do not strain.
4. When the temperature is tolerable, put your feet (or someone **else's feet**) in and soak for at least 10 minutes.
5. If more is needed, reheat, but no need to bring it to a boil.

This footbath can stop an acute asthma attack, although the effect may be gradual. You may keep your feet in the footbath for hours if necessary. It is more effective when hot, but not harmful when cold. One may fall asleep with their feet in the footbath, although I advise placing a towel underneath in case of spillage. Nightly use of this footbath should reduce both the incidence and the severity of asthma attacks, and it should aid greatly in recovery from bronchitis. In the case of pneumonia, the footbath should accompany other treatment.



Thyme's Ancient and Modern Culinary Uses

Gina Gibbons

Perched perfectly as you enter a restaurant, a beautiful painting of the sweetly simple-yet-powerful herb known as thyme greets you. Inscribed underneath the realistic interpretation of this classic herb **are the words, "Never Enough Thyme." Isn't it true?** Thyme is a flavor that is often not highlighted alone, but instead lends itself to spice blends found throughout the world. The blends are truly the foundation of flavor for many staple dishes. It is not an herb to **overlook, because only once it's omitted** would you truly notice the lack of depth a recipe might have without it.

Thyme is native to Mediterranean climates and certain parts of Asia but now grows across the globe. It has strong medicinal properties and has been used throughout ancient cultures for centuries. There are approximately 350 varieties of thyme! This article will mostly be referring to the most common variety, *Thymus vulgaris*, though

I highly recommend seeking out the other varieties to experiment, play with, and perhaps grow.

Typically, fresh thyme is sold in bundles—clusters of sprigs harvested just before flowering. When a recipe calls for a sprig or bunch of the herb, it is calling for fresh. It is also sold dry, stripped from its woody stem, and can be added to recipes this way as well. Depending on the dish, fresh or dried may be optimal, but I always prefer to go with fresh if possible, as I find the flavor brighter and more enlivening. It should be noted, however, that compared to most other dried herbs, thyme retains its flavor very well.

There are several theories as to the origin of the word “thyme.” Some believe it has connection to the Greek word *thumos* or the Latin word *fumus*, which both refer to smoke or fumigation. This could be a reference to its use as an incense or perhaps its purifying properties. It is said that the ancient Romans used thyme as an incense.² Thyme is used magically as a protective plant and can be burned as incense to purify and cleanse a space or a person.

There’s also an association of luck with thyme and many believe that planting this herb in the garden can increase one’s financial abundance. The word *thumos* could also refer to courage: Thyme was often embroidered into scarves that were given to loved ones risking their lives for their communities, which they wore as a symbol of protection. Artistic renderings of thyme flower also appeared on necklaces worn by knights, meant to give them the will and courage to fight through battle.¹

Due to its high content of a medicinal compound known as thymol, ancient Egyptians used thyme in the embalming process. Medicinally, it is highly antibacterial and antifungal, which would help preserve the dead. It was also added to baths to physically

clean and energetically cleanse a person. It is considered a holy plant of worship and many references to it can be found in the Bible. Thyme served as a key ingredient for a vision-inducing love potion that was suggested to be done on **St. Luke's Day (October 18th)**:

Take marigold flowers, a sprig of marjoram, thyme, and a little wormwood; dry them before a fire, rub them to powder, then sift it through a fine piece of lawn; simmer these with a small quantity of virgin honey, in white vinegar, over a slow fire; with this anoint your stomach, breasts, and lips, lying down, and repeat these words thrice:

*'St Luke, St. Luke, be kind to me,
In dream let me my true love see!
This said, hasten to sleep, and in the soft slumbers of night's repose,
the very man whom you shall marry shall appear before you.'*²

France

As a culinary herb, we can find thyme literally throughout most places on earth in some form. Probably one of the most famous associations is with French cooking, as it is a major component of the classic *bouquet garni*. **Translating to "garnished bouquet,"** it simply refers to a bundle of aromatic herbs that are tied together with string and typically added to stocks for soup or stew. It is removed before eating, but it adds an important depth of flavor that would be missing otherwise. There is no set formula or recipe for this bouquet, but thyme is almost always included.

Another classic herb blend that calls on thyme is *herbes de Provence*. Originally, this blend was just referring to herbs that grew in the Provençal region of southeastern France. Like the *bouquet*

garni, there is no set recipe for the blend of herbs, but again, it almost always includes thyme. Also typically included are: rosemary, oregano, marjoram, savory, and lavender. One need not feel confined, however; other herbs like basil, mint, sage, bay leaf, and even dried orange peel can find their way into *herbes de Provence* as well. The herbs are usually dried, but they can also be used fresh (their proportions will vary in this case). Julia Child is credited with bringing *herbes de Provence* into mainstream awareness through her classic cooking show. Eventually, big food companies started producing herb blends like this one, and now you can find them everywhere. The blend is often used to flavor meat and soups while cooking, and although it is classically French, it lends well to Italian dishes too.

Jamaica

I didn't think to associate thyme with tropical climates but, of course, it has found its way into cuisine across the globe, and that includes the Caribbean, where it has become a staple flavor. In Jamaica, due to its versatility, you can find it in many of their most popular dishes including jerk chicken and rice and peas. There is a plant commonly referred to as Jamaican thyme (which has a bit stronger and more pungent flavor), but the most-used variety is *Thymus vulgaris*, or common thyme, which grows easily there as well. Typically, it is added towards the end of cooking, either chopped or as whole fresh sprigs.



*Rice and Peas*³

Ingredients

- 1–2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 white or yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1½ C long grain or basmati rice
- 1¾ C coconut milk
- 1¾ C water
- 14 ounces kidney beans (1 can)
- large pinch salt and fresh ground pepper
- large pinch dried thyme or several sprigs fresh
- handful fresh cilantro, chopped

Directions

1. In a large, deep frying pan, heat the oil over medium heat and sauté the onion for about **8–10 minutes, or until it's translucent.**
2. Add the rice to the pan.
3. Add the coconut milk and water.
4. Bring to a boil and reduce heat.

5. Add the kidney beans, salt, pepper and thyme, then simmer and stir occasionally until the rice is cooked and the liquid is absorbed.
6. Serve (typically on iceberg lettuce cups) and top with fresh cilantro.

Armenia

When traveling in Armenia, it was very common after each meal to be offered coffee or tea. Feeling like I need not choose between the two, I often requested both (we only live once, right?!). I was given a very strong cup of coffee and a milder herbal tea that I later came to find out was *urc* (**thyme**). **It's a perfect** tea to drink after a large meal, as it helps with digestion, making one feel less full. I always felt more energized and comfortable after drinking the tea. Armenia has a stunning natural landscape with an incredible diversity of medicinal plants, many of which we can easily recognize here in the West too. The variety of thyme used there grows wild in the mountainous regions and has been used for centuries not only as tea, but also for its medicinal properties.

The Levant and Israel

Another popular spice mixture that is found throughout the Middle East, specifically in the Levant, an area comprising Lebanon, Syria, **Jordan, Israel and Palestinian territories**, is **za'atar**. **Said to be from Holy Land**, the flavors included are indeed elevated and pure. It has been considered a staple in many cuisines since medieval times. A key ingredient of the blend is *Thymus capitatus*, which is a variety of thyme that grows wild on the hills and mountainsides of the **region**. **Za'atar can be found in most Palestinian households**, and

specifically thyme is said to be “powerfully associated with Palestine.”⁴ For refugees, this blend of spices has a deep and meaningful connection to their respective homelands, as each blend is unique to its region. Often in Palestine, za’atar will include caraway seeds, while in Lebanon, it has sumac, giving it a distinctive red color and even more nutrition value.



Za’atar Recipe

To make za’atar the traditional way, typically, the herbs are dried in the sun and then combined with sesame seeds and salt. The blend is sprinkled over hummus, eaten with pitas and other types of bread dipped in olive oil, and used in vegetable dishes. A strained yogurt known as labneh is delicious with za’atar sprinkled on top. It is included in countless dishes as a flavoring throughout the region and has spread beyond; different varieties of za’atar can be found throughout North Africa, including Morocco and Algeria. It is even used medicinally because the large amounts of thyme it contains can help keep intestinal parasites at bay.

Ingredients

- 4 tsp sumac
- 2 tsp sesame seeds
- 2 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 tsp marjoram

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients and store in an airtight container.

Cornmeal-Thyme Cookies⁵

I love the idea of using thyme beyond savory dishes and including it in desserts as well. Its flavor is so versatile that, remarkably, it works! I love the simplicity of this recipe.

Ingredients

- 1³/₄ C all-purpose flour
- 1 C stone ground yellow cornmeal
- 8 ounces (2 sticks) butter
- 2 large eggs
- 1 Tbsp + 1/2 tsp chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 1/4 C sugar
- 3/4 C dried currants

Directions

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set it aside.
2. Whisk together the flour, baking soda, cornmeal, and salt in a bowl and set aside.
3. Mix together the softened butter and sugar in a bowl until **it's pale and fluffy. It's easiest** if you use an electric mixer, but this can also be done by hand.
4. Mix in the eggs one at a time.
5. Add the dry mixture. Mix until combined.
6. Add the currants and thyme.
7. Using a small spoon, place small round balls of dough on the parchment-lined cookie sheet at least 2 inches apart.
8. Bake and continually rotate the positions of the cookie sheets until the cookies are golden brown (typically about 10–12 minutes).
9. Remove them from the oven, let cool, and enjoy!

I implore you to grow a thyme plant of your own, or at least remember to stock up on it next time at the market! It keeps very well, and any extra you have can always be dried and stored for later. Experiment with different spice blends, and even try it in a bath or as an incense. The uses of thyme are ancient and have withstood the test of time as a reliable and truly powerful herb in **many ways. Let's change the agreement of "Never enough Thyme" to "Plenty of Thyme."** Bon appetite, and enjoy!



Other Thyme Recipes

Amanda Klenner

All this talk about the various uses of thyme makes me hungry, for although there are many ways to enjoy it, I personally like eating it best! Here are some simple and not-so-simple ways to incorporate thyme and start using this herb as both food AND medicine!



Clearing Respiratory Steam

A good respiratory steam is just what the herbalist ordered, especially during cold and flu season! Nina shared her thyme herbal steam on pages 33–34, **but here's another version with** a few more ingredients for cold symptoms. I also enjoy this steam when my allergies are particularly nasty and runny. It helps open the lungs and offers an antimicrobial kick to fight the infection for a quicker recovery.

Ingredients

- 1 tsp thyme leaf
- 1 tsp sage leaf
- 1 tsp oregano leaf
- 1 tsp mullein leaf
- 1 tsp peppermint leaf

Directions

1. Mix all herbs together and put them into a heat resistant bowl.
2. Pour 4–6 cups of boiling water over the herbs, and place a towel over your head and the bowl, trapping the steam within the towel, and breathe deeply for as long as you can, up to 10 minutes.
3. Repeat as needed.



Lemon and Thyme Oil

This delicious culinary oil is a delight to add to vegetables, salads (both fruit and lettuce varieties), and white meats for a delicate flavor and aroma. It also promotes healthy digestion, a win-win!

Ingredients and Supplies

- glass canning jar, 1 pint
- 10–15 thyme sprigs, dried
- zest from 3 large lemons, dried
- 5–10 sprigs rosemary, dried

- 2 sprigs lavender leaf (if you have it) or ½ tsp lavender buds, dried (optional)
- Good quality organic olive oil (enough to fill the jar)

Directions

1. If **you've harvested any of** the herbs fresh, first dry them to avoid any chance of botulism in the oil.
2. Add herbs and oil to the jar.
3. Close the lid and leave in a sunny window for 4–6 weeks.
4. Strain, bottle with a sprig of thyme for show, and enjoy!

Four Thieves Vinegar

This legendary antimicrobial vinegar is said to have helped thieves survive the plagues across Europe for hundreds of years. There are endless variations of recipes, but they all feature aromatic herbs—including thyme—and vinegar. This would today be called a sipping vinegar—**one that's diluted with water** (or alcohol if you're enjoying it as a cocktail) and sipped. At our house, we take a cup of water and a tablespoon or two of the vinegar and drink it when people around us are sick, or we ourselves start to feel sick.

Note: the recipe is made with fresh herbs, but highly aromatic dry herbs will work just as well.

Ingredients and Supplies

- quart-size canning jar with a plastic lid
- 1 quart apple cider vinegar, raw, **"with the mother"**
- 4 Tbps chopped fresh lavender
- 4 Tbsp chopped fresh thyme
- 4 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
- 4 Tbsp chopped fresh marjoram or oregano

- 4 Tbsp chopped fresh sage
- 4 Tbsp chopped fresh hyssop
- 8 cloves of garlic, crushed

Directions

1. Place all the herbs into the jar.
2. Pour apple cider vinegar over the top, and place the lid on it. **(Vinegar causes metal lids to rust, but if you don't have a plastic lid, you can put plastic wrap over the top and then a regular metal lid over that.)**
3. Set in a cool, dark spot for 10–20 days.
4. Strain and bottle in a sanitized container. Refrigerate.
5. Take ½–1 ounce in 1 cup of water or mixed drink 3–4 times a day as needed.



Tuscan Herbal Salt

This herbal salt is wonderful on meats, vegetables, popcorn, eggs, even as a garnish for margaritas or bloody marys. Pretty much anything you would enjoy herbal aromatics and salt in, this salt fits. I

enjoy it on roasted vegetables, squash, white meats, and fish. The herbs are interchangeable with other favorites, so feel free to experiment! Your imagination is the limit!

Ingredients

- ½ C salt (I prefer Himalayan sea, Peruvian, or French grey salt)
- 2 C chopped fresh herbs (thyme, rosemary, sage, basil, parsley, marjoram, oregano, cilantro—your choice!).
- 4–5 cloves of garlic, peeled

Directions

1. Place all ingredients into a blender or food processor and pulse until the herbs are incorporated into the salt fully.
2. Lie out on a flat sheet tray and allow the salt to dry and preserve the herbs.
3. Place in an herb shaker and enjoy as you would any other seasoning.

Herbes de Provence

Herbes de Provence is a traditional French spice for all things. It is delightful in soups, salads, meats, and cooked vegetables—a most versatile blend to have on hand and add a bit more spice to life.



Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp thyme
- 2 Tbsp savory
- 2 Tbsp crushed lavender flowers
- 1 Tbsp rosemary
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 tsp marjoram

Directions

Combine all ingredients and place in an airtight jar to use for seasoning.

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Culinary Uses

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² "A Brief History of Thyme." Wild Roots. Last modified June 29, 2010. <https://nuwildroots.wordpress.com/2010/06/29/a-brief-history-of-thyme-and-zoning/>.

³ Holland, Mina. *The World on a Plate: 40 Cuisines, 100 Recipes, and the Stories Behind Them*. 2015.

⁴ "Za'atar." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Last modified October 28, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Za%27atar#cite_note-Lienp148-31.

⁵ "Cornmeal-Thyme Cookies." Martha Stewart. Last modified December 19, 2010. <http://www.marthastewart.com/314257/cornmeal-thyme-cookies>.

A Glossary of Herbalism

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Do you feel befuddled by all of those terms? Are you curious about what a menstruum might be, or a nervine? Wondering what the exact difference is between an infusion and a decoction? Or what it means to macerate? Read on; the herbalist lexicographer will reveal it all!

Adaptogen n. An herb that enhances one's ability to thrive despite stress. Eleuthero, or Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) is a well-known adaptogen.

Aerial parts n. pl. The parts of a plant that grow above ground. Stems, leaves, and flowers are all aerial parts, in contrast to roots and rhizomes.

Alterative n. An herb that restores the body to health gradually and sustainably by strengthening one or more of the body's systems, such as the digestive or lymphatic system, or one or more of the vital organs, such as the liver or kidneys. Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) is an alternative.

adj. Restoring health gradually, as by strengthening one or more of the body's systems or vital organs.

Anthelmintic n. A substance that eliminates intestinal worms.

Anthelmin adj. Being of or concerning a substance that eliminates intestinal worms.

Anti-catarrhal n. A substance that reduces or slows down the production of phlegm.
adj. Being of or concerning a substance that reduces or slows down the production of phlegm.

Anti-emetic n. A substance that treats nausea. Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is anti-emetic.
adj. Being of or concerning a substance that treats nausea.

Anti-microbial n. An herb or a preparation that helps the body fight off microbial infections, whether viral, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic. Herbal anti-microbials may do this by killing the microbes directly, but more often achieve this by enhancing immune function and helping the body to fight off disease and restore balance.
adj. Being of or concerning an herb or a preparation that helps the body fight off microbial infections.

Aperient n. A gentle laxative, such as seaweed, plantain seeds (*Plantago spp.*), or ripe bananas.
adj. Being of or concerning a gentle laxative.

Aphrodisiac n. A substance that enhances sexual interest or desire.
adj. Being of or relating to a substance that enhances sexual interest or desire.

<i>Astringent</i>	n.	A food, herb, or preparation that causes tissues to constrict, or draw in. Astringents help stop bleeding, diarrhea, and other conditions in which some bodily substance is flowing excessively. Some astringents, such as Wild Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>), draw so powerfully that they can remove splinters.
	adj	Causing tissues to constrict, and thereby helping to stop excessive loss of body fluids.
<i>Bitter</i>	n.	A food, herb, or preparation that stimulates the liver and digestive organs through its bitter flavor. Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>) and Gentian (<i>Gentiana lutea</i>) are both bitters. Also called <i>digestive bitter</i> .
<i>Carminative</i>	n.	A food, herb, or preparation that reduces the buildup or facilitates the release of intestinal gases. Cardamom (<i>Amomum spp. and Elettaria spp</i>) and Fennel (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>) are carminatives.
	adj.	Characterized as reducing the buildup or facilitating the release of intestinal gases.
<i>Carrier Oil</i>	n.	A non-medicinal oil, such as olive or sesame oil, used to dilute an essential oil.
<i>Catarrh</i>	n.	An inflammation of the mucous membranes resulting in an overproduction of phlegm.
<i>Compound</i>	v.	To create a medicinal formula using two or more components.
	n.	An herbal preparation consisting of two or more herbs.

Compress n. A topical preparation consisting of a cloth soaked in a liquid herbal extract, such as an infusion or decoction, and applied, usually warm or hot, to the body. A washcloth soaked in a hot ginger decoction and applied to a sore muscle is a compress.

Decoct v. To prepare by simmering in water, usually for at least 20 minutes. One usually decocts barks, roots, *rhizomes*, hard seeds, twigs, and nuts.

Decoction n. An herbal preparation made by simmering the plant parts in water, usually for at least 20 minutes.

Demulcent n. An herb with a smooth, slippery texture soothing to the mucous membranes, i.e. the tissues lining the respiratory and digestive tracts. Slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), marshmallow root (*Althaea officinalis*), and sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*, *Sassafras officinale*) are all demulcents.

adj. Having a smooth, slippery texture that soothes the mucous membranes.

Diaphoretic n. An herb or preparation that opens the pores of the skin, facilitates sweat, and thereby lowers fevers. In Chinese medicine, diaphoretics are **said to “release the exterior.”** Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is a diaphoretic.

adj. Opening the pores, facilitating sweat, and thereby lowering fevers.

Digestive n. An herb, food, or preparation that promotes the healthy breakdown, assimilation, and elimination of food, as by gently stimulating the digestive tract in preparation for a meal. Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and bitter salad greens are digestives.

adj. 1 Concerning or being part of the bodily system responsible for the breakdown, assimilation, and elimination of food.

adj. 2 Promoting the healthy breakdown, assimilation, and/or elimination of food.

Diuretic n. A substance that facilitates or increases urination. Diuretics can improve kidney function and treat swelling. Excessive use of diuretics can also tax the kidneys. Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), cucumbers, and coffee are all diuretics.

adj. Facilitating or increasing urination.

Emmenagogue n. An herb or preparation that facilitates or increases menstrual flow. Black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) is an emmenagogue. Emmenagogues are generally contraindicated in pregnancy.

adj. Facilitating or increasing menstrual flow.

Essential Oil n. An oil characterized by a strong aroma, strong taste, the presence of terpenes, and by vaporizing in low temperatures. Essential oils are components of many plants, and when isolated, make fairly strong medicine used primarily externally or for inhalation, and usually not safe for internal use.

- n. 1 A preparation made by chemically removing the soluble parts of a substance into a solvent or menstruum. Herbalists often make extracts using water, alcohol, glycerin, vinegar, oil, or combinations of these. Infusions, medicinal vinegars, tinctures, decoctions, and medicinal oils are all extracts.
- n. 2 A tincture.

<i>Extract</i>	v.	To remove the soluble parts of a substance into a solvent or menstruum by chemical means.
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<i>Febrifuge</i>	n.	An herb or preparation that lowers fevers. Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>), ginger (<i>Zingiber officinale</i>), and boneset (<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>) are all febrifuges.
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<i>Galactagogue</i>	n.	A substance that increases the production or flow of milk; a remedy that aids lactation. Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) and hops (<i>Humulus lupulus</i>) are galactagogues.
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<i>Glandular</i>	n.	A substance that treats the adrenal, thyroid, or other glands. Nettle seeds (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) are a glandular for the adrenals.
	adj.	Relating to or treating the adrenal, thyroid, or other glands.

<i>Hepatic</i>	n.	A substance that treats the liver. Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>) is a hepatic.
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<i>Hypnotic</i>	n.	An herb or preparation that induces sleep. Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i>) and valerian (<i>Valeriana officinale</i>) are both hypnotics.
	adj.	Inducing sleep.

<i>Infuse</i>	v.	To prepare by steeping in water, especially hot water, straining, and squeezing the marc.
<i>Infusion</i>	n.	A preparation made by first steeping one or more plants or plant parts in water, most often hot water, and then straining the plant material, usually while squeezing the marc. An infusion extracts the flavor, aroma, and water-soluble nutritional and medicinal constituents into the water.
<i>Long Infusion</i>	n.	An infusion that steeps for three or more hours. Long infusions often steep overnight.
<i>Lymphatic</i>	n.	A substance that stimulates the circulation of lymph or <i>tonifies</i> the vessels or organs involved in the circulation or storage of lymph.
<i>Macerate</i>	v.	To soak a plant or plant parts in a <i>menstruum</i> so as to extract the medicinal constituents chemically.
Marc	n.	The plant material left after straining a preparation made by steeping, simmering, or macerating.
<i>Menstruum</i>	n.	(<i>Plural, menstrua or menstrooms.</i>) The solvent used to extract the medicinal and/or nutritional constituents from a plant. Water, alcohol, vinegar, and glycerin are among the more common menstrua.
<i>Mucilage</i>	n.	A thick, slippery, <i>demulcent</i> substance produced by a plant or microorganism.

Mucilaginous	n.	Having or producing mucilage; <i>demulcent</i> . Okra, marshmallow root (<i>Althaea officinalis</i>), sassafras (<i>Sassafras albidum</i> , <i>Sassafras officinale</i>), and slippery elm (<i>Ulmus rubra</i>) are all mucilaginous.
Nervine	n.	An herb or preparation that helps with problems traditionally associated with the nerves, such as mental health issues, insomnia, and pain.
	adj.	Helping with problems traditionally associated with the nerves, such as mental health issues, insomnia, and pain.
Pectoral	n.	A substance that treats the lungs or the respiratory system.
Poultice	n.	A mass of plant material or other substances, usually mashed, gnashed, moistened, or heated, and placed directly on the skin. Sometimes covered by a cloth or adhesive. A plantain (<i>Plantago spp.</i>) poultice can draw splinters out.
Rhizome	n.	A usually horizontal stem that grows underground, is marked by nodes from which roots grow down, and branches out to produce a network of new plants growing up from the nodes.
Salve	[sæv] n.	A soothing ointment prepared from beeswax combined with oil, usually medicinal oil, and used in topical applications.
Short Infusion	n.	An <i>infusion</i> that steeps for a relatively short period of time, usually 5-30 minutes.

Sedative	n.	A substance that calms and facilitates sleep. Valerian (<i>Valeriana officinale</i>) is a sedative.
Sedative	adj.	Calming and facilitating sleep.
Simple	n.	An herbal preparation, such as a tincture or decoction, made from one herb alone.
Simpler	n.	An herbalist who prepares and recommends primarily <i>simples</i> rather than compounds.
Spp.	abbr. n.pl.	Species. <i>Used to indicate more than one species in the same botanical family. Echinacea spp.</i> includes both <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> and <i>Echinacea angustifolium</i> , among other species. <i>Plantago spp.</i> includes both <i>Plantago major</i> and <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> .
Stimulant	n.	An herb or preparation that increases the activity level in an organ or body system. Echinacea (<i>Echinacea spp.</i>) is an immunostimulant; it stimulates the immune system. Cayenne (<i>Capsicum spp.</i>) is a circulatory stimulant. Rosemary is a stimulant to the nervous, digestive, and circulatory systems.
Sudorific	adj.	Increasing sweat or facilitating the release of sweat; cf. <i>diaphoretic</i> .
Syrup	n.	A sweet liquid preparation, often made by adding honey or sugar to a decoction.
Tea	n.	A drink made by steeping a plant or plant parts, especially <i>Camellia sinensis</i> .

Tisane	n.	An herbal beverage made by decoction or short infusion and not prepared from the tea plant (<i>Camellia sinensis</i>).
Tincture	n.	A preparation made by macerating one or more plants or plant parts in a <i>menstruum</i> , usually alcohol or glycerin, straining, and squeezing the <i>marc</i> in order to extract the chemical constituents into the <i>menstruum</i> .
	v.	To prepare by <i>macerating</i> in a <i>menstruum</i> , straining, and squeezing the <i>marc</i> in order to extract the chemical constituents.
Tonic	n.	A substance that strengthens one or more organs or systems, or the entire organism. Stinging nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) is a general tonic, as well as a specific kidney, liver, and hair tonic. Red raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>) is a reproductive tonic; Mullein (<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>) is a respiratory tonic.
Tonify	v.	To strengthen. Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) tonifies the entire body.
Volatile Oil	n.	An oil characterized by volatility, or rapid vaporization at relatively low temperatures; cf. <i>essential oil</i> .
Vulnerary	n.	A substance that soothes and heals wounds. Comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>) is an excellent vulnerary.
	adj.	Being or concerning a substance that soothes and heals wounds.

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