

# Did You Know?

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## Thyme, *Thymus* spp.

- There are 300 – 400 species of plants whose common name is thyme and that are cultivated all over the world. *Thymus vulgaris*, known as common or English thyme, is the most common culinary variety.
- Lemon, orange, lime, nutmeg, oregano, lavender, and rose are fragrances and flavors of other culinary species and cultivars. There are also non culinary varieties grown primarily for ornamental use.
- Grow thyme species in full sun and well drained soil. Regular pruning helps decrease the woody stems on the plant by promoting new growth.
- Thyme is hardy and can be grown in perennial borders, containers, hanging baskets and of course, herb gardens.
- The use of thyme has a lot of folklore, associations, and traditions:
  - It is used as a symbol of bravery and courage in the language of flowers.
  - The fragrance was thought to promote courage, bravery, and strength.
  - The exchange of thyme sprigs between Roman soldiers was a sign of respect.
  - Thyme is used in charms to enable you to see fairies.
  - Soldiers would soak in thyme-steeped bath water and may have sprigs of thyme sewn into their scarves before going off to battle.
  - It is thought that thyme was mixed with the manger hay and straw where Jesus was laid.
  - Today it is used to sweeten linens in Europe and stuffed in pillows.
  - Thyme was planted at gravesites, used to adorn the dead and in Egyptian mummification process.
  - Through the ages, ancient Greeks, Romans, and others burned bundles of thyme for both courage and to rid their homes, temples and other spaces of insects and other venomous creatures.
  - Thyme was considered a preventative to poison if consumed before or during a meal and an antidote to snake and sea creature venoms.
- Thyme essential oil contains antioxidant, antifungal and antibacterial properties. Thymol is the primary chemical constituent of thyme.

- Historically, thyme has a long history of medicinal use, with applications ranging from breathing difficulties, digestive disorders, immune support, nervous system restoration, mood imbalances, among others. It also has had a role in food preservation.
- Today, thymol is used commercially in producing hand sanitizer, mouthwash and acne medications. It is the subject of research and is used by modern day herbalists.

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