

Borage

(Borago officinalis)

It has long been said that those who partake of borage receive a sense of well-being and bravery. Ancient Celtic warriors drank wine with borage to give them courage before going into battle. An old wives' tale suggests smuggling the herb into the drink of a prospective bridegroom to give him the nerve to propose.

The vivid lavender-blue, star-shaped flowers add color to an herb garden, though the plant grows in a rather wild and unruly manner.

Culinary uses

Borage has a cucumberlike flavor, and its fresh leaves add a delightful essence to salads and vegetables. Borage stems can be eaten raw, like celery, and the flowers can be tossed into salads or used as garnish. Because the flavor of borage is lost in drying or freezing, it should be used fresh or stored in vinegar.

Medicinal uses

Borage is touted as a diuretic and an emollient, and once was used to treat fevers and bronchitis.

Other uses

Borage helps protect surrounding plants from insects and disease. It also attracts bees to a garden.

Cultivation

Borage is easily grown from seed as soon as the danger of frost is past. It requires a fairly rich soil in full sun. Thin seedlings to 2 feet apart. Sometimes flowers don't appear until the second year. Borage also is a successful indoor container herb, as long as plenty of root space is provided.