

Costmary

(Chrysanthemum balsamita)

This herb was known in colonial times as "Bible leaf." Puritans kept it pressed between the pages of their Bibles to call on its refreshing balsam scent to whiff them awake during long and boring sermons. The name costmary, meaning "woman's spicy herb," is derived from the plant's early use to help ease the pain of childbirth.

Culinary uses

Costmary was very popular among beer drinkers ages ago; a leaf dropped into a drooping pint of ale brought the drink back to life. Try adding a small amount of snipped costmary to vegetable soups and poultry stuffing.

Medicinal uses

Press crushed costmary leaves onto a bee sting to help ease the pain and swelling.

Other uses

In potpourris, costmary helps intensify the scents of other herbs.

Cultivation

Because seed production is sparse, costmary must be divided from existing plants. Divide in the spring and plant 2 feet apart in a sunny, dry area.