

Sage

(Salvia officinalis)

Sage, as its name implies, is said to carry powers of wisdom, as well as longevity. It was considered a valuable commodity in 17th-century China, when merchants would trade three or four chests of tea for one chest full of sage.

Sage is known as a cure-all. American Indians mixed the herb with bear grease to create an all-purpose salve.

Culinary uses

Fresh sage has a slight lemony flavor; when dried it has a stronger, mustier taste. Dried sage is a staple ingredient in poultry stuffings. The herb is compatible with rosemary, thyme, oregano, parsley, and bay.

Medicinal uses

In addition to its digestive properties, sage also acts as an antiseptic and soothes coughs and colds.

Other uses

Bursting into blue or lavender flowers in the spring, sage makes an attractive addition to an herb garden, as well as to cut-flower arrangements.

Cultivation

Sage prefers a sunny location in light, dry, alkaline soil. It can be grown from seeds or cuttings. Harvest the leaves before the plant flowers, and cut the plant back after flowering. Prune frequently.