

HOW TO GROW THYME

OVERVIEW: Thyme is a low-growing, wiry-stemmed perennial that reaches about 6 to 10 inches in height. The stems are stiff and woody and leaves are small, oval, and gray-green in color. The lilac flowers are borne in small clusters and the leaves are very aromatic.

Thyme is widely used as a seasoning. Oil of thyme is used in medicines and perfumes. It goes well in gumbos, bouillabaisse, clam chowder, poultry stuffings, and slow-cooking beef dishes.

Mat-forming, low spreading, aromatic perennial with very tiny leaves and flowers. 4-5 inches high ground cover, in lightly traversed areas. Any well-drained soil will do. Can be invasive. More decorative than flavourful. Thyme is a digestive aid and mildly sedative; thyme honey is tasty and said to help with colds and sore throats.

PROPAGATION / SOWING: Thyme can be propagated from seed, root division and cuttings. The best way if you have no existing plants is to grow from seed - this will however take about a year. The best way to grow is from root division. Cuttings are not recommended.

COMPANION PLANTING: Thyme is said to repel cabbage root flies. Since bees are strongly attracted to thyme, plant where pollination is required

CARE & GROWING: In spring, sow thyme seeds in a seed tray or scatter directly onto the ground. Keep plants moist while young. Thin to about 6 inches apart. Once well established, thyme does not require much watering or any fertilizer. Propagation by root division should be done in spring. Divide the bush into smaller parts, making sure each piece has rootlets attached. Cuttings should be taken in late spring. Insert 4-inch shoot tips into pots of sand medium and keep them well watered.

HARVESTING: Harvest only very lightly in the first year (if at all). Harvest all year round, although the best flavour is in the months of June and July. In winter the plants stop growing, so harvest only lightly. The thyme sprigs can be frozen or dried - both methods retain the original flavour.

USAGE: Aromatic, cosmetic, culinary, decorative, and medicinal. The dried flowers and leaves scent potpourris and sachets. Thyme also is used as an antiseptic and stimulant in herb lotions and baths. It flavors vinegars, herbal butter, tea, poultry, fish, stuffings, stews, soups, bread, mayonnaise, mushrooms, and broccoli. Fresh or dried thyme may be added to salads. It is used in wreaths and in floral arrangements. Thyme can be grown in containers. It is said to have some medicinal qualities.