

344. *THYMUS VULGARIS* L. (LAMIACEAE) — Common Thyme

Used to flavor or scent butters, cheeses, chowders, fish, liqueurs, meats, olives, onions, perfumes, pickles, poultry, sauces, soaps, soups, stews, stuffings, tomatoes, and vinegars. Some cooks (definitely not French) say "use thyme almost as freely as salt." It is an ingredient of the liqueur Benedictine. Thyme is one of the better honey plants. If the bees won't make your thyme honey add hot thyme tea to other honey types. Sheep who feed on thyme are said to develop an especially delicate flavor. Currently it is popular as a tisane, mixed with such herbs as mint and rosemary. Thyme butter spread over steak before cooking is good. Dried flowers, like lavender, are said to preserve linen from insects, scenting them at the same time. In sufficient dose, carvacrol and thymol have tracheal relaxant properties. Thymol and thyme oil act as secretomotoric and disinfectant agent. Application of thyme extracts causes an important increase of mucus secretion of the bronchii. The antispasmodic action of thyme oil has been demonstrated, with the phenols generally regarded as the active agents. This may be true for the secretomotoric, secretolytic, and antiseptic effects. One author has suggested, though, that thyme oil increases the antitussive action of unknown, water-soluble components. Others report spasmolytic activity of fresh-plant extracts compared to inactivity in dried plants.

An ointment derived from the plant is a folk remedy for indurations and warts. Thyme tea (1 teaspoon fresh leaves steeped in 1 cup boiling water) said to be good for headache. The hot aqueous extract is said to cure tumors of the digestive tract. The juice, with vinegar, is said to cure tumors and cancers. Thyme has reportedly been used in bronchitis, catarrh, colic, diabetes, fever, gout, laryngitis, leprosy, rheumatism, scarlet fever, sciatica, sore throat, spleen disorders, uterine disorders, warts, and whooping cough.³² It is considered antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, and tonic. Smoked like tobacco, it is used for digestion, drowsiness, and headache. Burning thyme is supposed to repel insects. Thymol, the oil of thyme, is an antiseptic and deodorant, used externally and internally. It has been used as a meat preservative, and is used to treat burns, eczema, hookworm, psoriasis, ringworm, and worms. It is used as a fungicide to prevent mildew, and as an ingredient in toothpastes. It is used as a diffusible stimulant in case of collapse. It is said to cause mental excitement. It has been used externally as a rubefacient counterirritant. Thymol may cause abortion, coloring the urine green. Said to be anodyne, antiseptic, antitussive, aperitif, carminative, demulcent, depurative, diaphoretic, digestive, diuretic, expectorant, fungicide, nervine, pectoral, rubefacient, sedative, stimulant, and vermifuge. Thyme is a reputed folk remedy for anemia, asthma, bad breath, bronchitis, bruises, callosities, cancer, catarrh, colds, colic, cough, cramps, debility, diabetes, diarrhea, dysmenorrhea, fever, flatulence, gastritis, gastroenteritis, gingivitis, gout, headache, indurations of heart, indigestion, leucorrhea, lung, melancholy, nerves, neuralgia, sciatica, sclerosis, skin, snakebite, sore, sore throat, spasm, sprain, stomach, stomatitis, tumors (of the liver, spleen, and digestive tract), warts, whooping cough, and worms.^{32,33}

The thyme of commerce originates from either *T. vulgaris* L. or *T. zygis* L., wild thyme originates from *T. serpyllum* L., and Moroccan thyme originates from *T. satureioides* Cass. Essential oils from the four species contain alpha-pinene, camphene, beta-pinene, myrcene, alpha-phellandrene, limonene, 1,8-cineole, p. cymene, linalool, linalyl acetate, bornyl acetate, terpinen-4-ol, alpha-terpinyl acetate, alpha-terpineol, borneol, citral (neral, geranial, or both?), geraniol, thymol, and carvacrol. In *T. vulgaris*, thymol and terpinen-4-ol were major compounds; in *T. zygis* and *T. serpyllum*, thymol, linalool, and linalyl acetate were major compounds, while in *T. satureioides* thymol, borneol, and alpha-terpineol were major compounds.¹⁹³ Per 100 g, ground thyme is reported to contain 276 calories, 7.8 g H₂O, 9.1 g protein, 7.4 g fat, 63.9 g total carbohydrate, 18.6 g fiber, 11.7 g ash, 1890 mg Ca, 201 mg P, 123.6 mg Fe, 220 mg Mg, 55 mg Na, 814 mg K, 6.2 mg Zn, 3800 IU vitamin A,