

Healing Garden Herb Guides

Thyme

Botanical Name *Thymus officinalis* L

Family: Lamiaceae

What is it?

Thyme is a perennial aromatic bush indigenous to the western Mediterranean and southern Italy. It can grow to heights of 30cm though is often much lower, its leaves are small, narrow and elliptical in shape and are a characteristic deep green colour with a strong aroma. Its flowers are also small, delicate and a pale pink/purple in colour. It is often found clinging in rocky crevices or growing in apparently barren soils.

How can I grow it?

There are many thyme varieties though for best healthcare and flavour benefits the simple *Thymus officinalis* is preferred (*officinalis* means that it was once official in medical reference texts). It likes well-drained soil and full sun, thrives in pots and alpine gardens but needs to be protected from frost.



How can I use it?

- **Eating**

Thyme is a classic component of Mediterranean cooking herb mixtures, along with oregano and marjoram. It works very well with omelettes, cheese dishes and tomatoes. It is also a traditional ingredient of poultry stuffing mixtures and is often used for flavouring meat dishes as well.

- **Healing**

Thyme a familiar culinary herb originally used to help digestion as well as for flavouring food. It will help to settle upset digestion, including with symptoms of dyspepsia, colic and irritable bowel. It combines the calming effects on the gut muscles of its volatile oils, with a gentle bitter digestive effect.

It really comes into its own as a remedy for coughs and tightness in the chest. It is a first choice to calm the dry irritating cough of children, and for any cough associated with airway tightness or wheezing. It is even worth trying to relieve ongoing symptoms of asthma. With its antiseptic volatile oils it may also help with more productive coughs where there is infection in the lungs.

For its health benefits you should aim to have 4-8 grams of dried herb daily, in teas.

Is there anything to watch out for?

Thyme is very safe. Very rarely hypersensitivity (allergy) reactions have been reported.

For much more information read about thyme on HerbalReality.com

A Thyme Recipe

Thyme and chilli bean stew: a cheap warming healthy protection against colds.

1. Heat up a cast iron or other heavy pan and add one large chopped onion with a tablespoonful of olive oil. Cook slowly until the onions have softened.
2. Add strips of red pepper, sliced carrots or bulb fennel as required and cook slowly for another 10 minutes.
3. Add a touch of chilli powder or a teaspoonful of harissa paste.
4. Add enough haricot or cannelloni beans for the servings you need, either from tins, or if dried, after being soaked overnight.
5. Add a little water or vegetable stock with a good handful of fresh thyme or at least two teaspoonfuls of dried thyme.
6. Throw in a handful of chopped tomatoes.
7. Cover and cook gently for 45 minutes or longer, at least until all the contents have melded into a rich stew. Adjust the spiciness with Tabasco sauce or more harissa if needed.
8. Dress with fresh coriander, feta cheese, or olives as required.

