

Sage

More than simply a tasty condiment, the English name itself means a wise person worthy of respect, a sentiment that appears to have been shared by a wide variety of cultures. Used primarily as a medicine for most of its history Sage's botanic name 'Salvia' is derived from the Latin 'salveo', which means to heal. The French agree with this opinion, for their name for the herb is "tout bonne", meaning "all well". Indeed this herb is highly regarded around the world for its healing qualities, being revered as a sacred plant by Romans and Native Americans alike. It is sage that was said to be given by the Great Spirit to the Native Americans to use in their smudging and cleansing before ceremonies, and an ancient Italian author stated: 'Why should a man grow old and die when he can get sage from his garden?'. The two key ideas that run through this herbs mythology are longevity and sanctity.

As a long forgotten ginseng of the west Sage has been traditionally used for almost every condition imaginable, but one of the more interesting is that of clarity of mind. Perhaps due to the essential oils that are found in the leaf and its strong aromatic nature, Sage was once drunk by the elderly to help assist in memory and focus. Once again science has recently validated this traditional usage, and in a double blind, randomized and placebo-controlled trial, sage was found to be effective in the management of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. Interestingly however, Sage is often said to be contraindicated in epilepsy.

Another possible reason for its wide use and the Chinese traders willingness to trade three crates of tea for a single crate of sage is its ability to treat a wide range of infections. Once again, this is most probably due to the plants high essential oil content, which is itself anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-septic. Although it was employed for everything from battle wounds to chest infections a common use that has survived into modern times is as a mouth wash. Strong Sage tea may be combined with a pinch of salt and used for an enormous array of mouth infections, from gingivitis and tonsillitis, to bad breath and mouth ulcers.

Sage was also historically recommended by European herbalists to treat fever, a usage that probably arose from sage's ability to fight infection and reduce perspiration. Modern scientific research has now demonstrated that sage reduces perspiration by as much as 50 percent. That is why today, there are sage-based natural deodorants sold at most health food stores. In addition to this Sage tea may be drunk after meals two or three times a day for up to a month at a time to attempt to correct the problem at a deeper level. This should not be continued for long periods of time however, for Sage has a mild level of cumulative toxicity that must be avoided by regular breaks and intervals of two weeks. Finally, Sage has also traditionally been used as a women's herb and drunk at their 'moon time' to promote menstruation. For women that have been without their period for some time a cup of strong Sage tea three times a day may be drunk for up to a month to attempt to stimulate its return. Some scientific studies indicate that it may work by helping to stimulate uterine contractions; pregnant women should therefore not consume highly concentrated forms of sage, although using it as a condiment has been found free from danger.

For Best results with all your herbs and spices however, ALWAYS buy organic!

- The Barefoot Doctor