

# THE GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

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There is an old Arabian proverb that says,  
"How can a man die who has sage in his garden?"

We are experiencing a record-breaking heat wave. Today the temperature is predicted to reach over 100° and we are only halfway through this heat-wave. We have had only occasional scattered light showers here so the garden is quite dry. The squash is plentiful and I have melons growing. Chili peppers thrive in this heat.

We lifted morale on our site with a picnic. In the heat of July we find it helps to refresh our spirits with a party and we expressed our appreciation for our junior interpreters. They were acknowledged for their hard work and received certificates and awards of appreciation. It was a great success! We owe our thanks to Jennifer Poirier who is responsible for planning the picnic and serving as the emcee.

The value of growing herbs in the garden was recognized very early. Citrus Crescentius's *Opus Ruralium Commodorum*, a thirteenth-century treatise on farming and gardening promoted the growing of herbs, "according to the pleasures they afford to the mind, consequently preserving the health of the body as the state of the body affects the mind." He included them in his pleasure garden stating, "a great diversity of medicinal and aromatic herbs which not only please by the odor of their scents, but by their variety of flowers refresh the sight."

Sage is the herb of my garden that I choose to focus on this month. Its botanical name is *Salvia officinalis*. Sage has always been known for its health giving properties and *salvia* means health. There is also a great deal of folklore related to sage. One old legend states that sage prospers in a garden the woman rules. Another belief is that the condition of the health of the sage plant depends upon the prosperity of the master of the house. Another bit of folklore believes that sage only grows well if it is planted by one with a lucky hand. An old English proverb says, "*He who would live for aye, must eat sage in May.*" The leaves are at their best in the month of May and it was believed human life could be prolonged by eating sage leaves in May. There was also the religious belief that sage had the power to dispel evil spirits and that legend grew because sage was used in the

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treatment for snakebite. "It's a plant, indeed, with so many and wonderful properties as the assiduous use of it is said to render men immortal," wrote John Evelyn in 1699.

Three hundred years ago Nicholas Culpepper advised the use of sage and honey for a mouthwash for sore mouths and throats. The cooling effects of sage on the system is good for treatment for a common cold and useful for relief of coughs due to asthma as well. The Indians treated fevers with sage tea. John Wesley recommended washing the face with sage tea for relief of sunburn, and both tea and a conserve of sage flowers were taken to help you have a good memory.

Hannah Glasse gives directions for making sage tea for the sick. She writes, "Take a little sage, a little baum, put it into a pan, slice a lemon, peel and all, one glass of white wine, pour on these two or three quarts of boiling water, cover it, and drink when thirsty."

Sage grows best in sunny, well-drained soil. It is a perennial. It has been used for food seasoning and we can find early medieval recipes for pork sauce, which contained sage, parsley, breadcrumbs, vinegar and the yolks of hard-boiled eggs.

From *The English Hus wife* by Gervase Markham, 1675 there is an Elizabethan salad that includes small, tender sage leaves and spinach with fruits, nuts, and sugar. This was a special salad used a great feasts and it sounds delicious!

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century sage was often an ingredient in broth's and soups mixed with oatmeal, a kind of potage.

Today the taste adds flavor to white meat, pork and poultry. It has a strong taste and it is often included in stuffing and sausages. It is quite often blended with onions, and should be used sparingly due to its strong, overpowering flavor. So if you wish to live a long, healthy, life and have the ability to remember your life I recommend that you drink many cups of sage tea.

*Janet Guthrie*



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