

Common Name: **Sage**

Genus: *Salvia*

Species: *officinalis*

Family: Lamiaceae

AKA: Sawage, Garden Sage, Sage the Saviour, Salfia, Saluie



Historical Uses:

### *Cur moriatur homo cui Salvia crescit in horto?*

‘Why should a man die whilst sage grows in his garden?’

#### **Medical:**

“Helps the sinews and paralyzed limbs when rubbed on in an ointment, halts palsy of the hands when bathed in it, strengthens the gums and stomach, and opens the urinary passages. It draws phlegm from the sinuses, induces the menses, and aborts the fetus. The juice, an antidote to snakebite, eases boils, darkens the hair, and restrains bleeding. It also cleanses concealed ulcers, heals and purifies wounds, and cures pruritus from the male and female genitals.” (1)

“Ye decoction of the leaves, and of ye branches hath the power being drank, to move ye urine and ye menstra, and to draw out ye Embrya, and to help ye stokes of ye Pastinaca marina. It dyes ye hair black also, and it is a wound-herb, and a blood-stancher, and a cleanser of ye wild ulcers. But ye decoction of ye leaves, and of the branches of them with wine being fomented on, assuageth ye itchings about ye privities.”(2)



It was considered good for the general health. Sage soothed the nerves, quieted the shaking of the palsy, improved digestion “Also,” says *Banckes’s Herbal* “it is good for venom or poison. (3)

“Sage is a singular good for the head and braine, it quickenth the senses and strengthneth the sinews, restoreth health to those that have the palse upon a moist cause, takes away shaking or trembling of the members, and being put up into the nostrils, it draweth thing flume out of the head.” (4)

#### **Culinary:**

The leaves and their oil are employed for culinary purposes, for flavoring wine and cheese, and as a tea. Its oil is used in perfume, cosmetics, chocolate, and baked goods; the flower is a favorite garden ornamental. (5)

“Sage was well at the top of any mediaeval list of herbs. It was grown “for potage,” for salads, for “Pig in Sawce Sage,” for poultry stuffings and meat pies. For “chickens in hocchee,” says the *Forme of Cury*, “take chickens and scald them. Take parsley and sage without any other herbs. Take garlic and grapes ans stop the chickens full and seethe them in good broth... and mess them forth.” *The Goodman of Paris* describes how to make sage water for hand washing at meals, how to flavor white wine with sage, ginger, and bay leaves, and how to cure a toothache by breathing the steam of boiling water into which “sage and other herbs” have been “set.” (6)



Young sage plant

**Folklore/Astrology:**

Warm and dry, it is subject to Jupiter. When placed in a lamp it will reveal all snakes in the household and, if eaten while fasting for nine consecutive days, cures fever. (7) “It was held that the plant would thrive or wither, just as the owner’s business prospered or failed. And in Bucks, another tradition maintained that the wife rules when Sage grows vigorously in the garden.”(8)

**Other:** Name of the genus *Salvia* comes from the Latin *salvere*, to be saved, in reference to the curative properties of the plant, which in olden times was celebrated as a medical herb.”(9)

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**Contemporary Uses:**

**Parts Used:** Leaves, oil.

**Medicinal:** “Sage is one of the best styptics available. A few fresh leaves, lightly worked and applied to a cut or wound will quickly stop the bleeding. The same effect may be had with dried Sage, but it is more difficult to create a natural poultice with it other than immersion in hot water, both awkward and time consuming, for bleeding needs immediate attention. Sage is an essential herb to grow in one’s garden. An ointment of Sage may be kept at hand and, like comfrey, should be in any working area, such as kitchen, construction areas, etc.

Sage is taken internally, being good for the stomach, calming indigestion, and also used to discourage constipation. Sage works well in the treatment of ulcerated stomachs, helping to tone the tissue; the astringent working against the ulcer itself.

Sage may be used externally as a liniment, being good for sore muscles, arthritis, and the like. It should be kept handy for athletes, and for those old of joint, prone to stiffness, and likely to ache.

A wash made of Sage may be used as a gargle, one of the most effective in the treatment of oral infections. This gargle can also be used in treating throat infections, and preventing the germs of colds and viruses from spreading. Sage is also used in early treatment of colds and chills, and may be added to any remedy for the lungs and respiratory system. Sage will reduce fever, and also works as an expectorant.” (10)

**Culinary:** “Leaves are used to flavor meat dishes (especially pork), liver, goose, soups, stews, sauces, sausages, *saltimbocca* (an Italian dish of veal and ham), eels, and stuffings for pork and poultry; also as an ingredient of sage Derby cheese (England) and American sage cheese. Fresh or dried leaves are made into tea.” (11)

**Economic:** “Oil is used as a fixative for perfumes; also added to toothpastes and cosmetics.” (12)

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**Area of Origin:** North Africa and Mediterranean

**Physical description:** Shrubby, evergreen perennial with much branched stems and wrinkled, velvety, pale gray-green leaves.

**Plant type:** Evergreen perennial

**Form:** Upright

**Height:** 60-80 cm (24-32in)

**Flower color:** Purple

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Well-drained to dry, neutral to alkaline soil.

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 5-8

**Sun requirements:** Full sun.

**Propagation:** By seed sown in spring; by basal or softwood cuttings in spring and summer; by semi-ripe cuttings in late summer and early autumn; by division.

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## **Sources**

1. Anderson, pg. 284
2. Dioscorides, Bk. 3, 40.
3. Freeman, pg 13
4. Gerard, pg. 763-766
5. Anderson, pg. 283-284
6. Freeman, pg 13
7. Anderson, pg. 283-284
8. Grieve, pg. 700-701
9. Ibid.
10. Beyerl, pg. 151
11. Bown, pg. 356

**Illustrations/Images:**

1. Gerard's Herbal 1633
2. PSUMG 2013