





# Thyme

(*Thymus vulgaris*)

**Common + Folk Names** : Common thyme, garden thyme

**Tarot Cards** : The Hermit

**Element** : Fire, Water

**Zodiac Signs** : Taurus (Guardian), Virgo (Guardian), Capricorn (Remedy)

**Planets** : Mars, Venus

**Moon Phase** : Waxing Quarter Moon

**Parts used** : Aboveground plant

**Habitat** : Native to Europe, Asia, and north Africa, but widely naturalized.

**Growing conditions** : Full sun in well-drained soil on the drier side.

**Collection** : Collect early in spring before flowering.

**Flavor** : Pungent

**Temperature** : Warm

**Moisture** : Dry

**Tissue State** : Damp/Stagnation, Damp/Relaxation, Cold/Depression

**Constituents** : Vitamin B, vitamin C, chromium, essential oil, labiatic acid, antioxidants, manganese, tannin, flavonoids, saponins, triterpenic acids

**Actions** : Anthelmintic, antibiotic, antifungal, antimicrobial, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antitussive, aromatic, astringent, bronchodilator, carminative, decongestant, diaphoretic, diuretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, immunostimulant, rejuvenative, rubefacient, sedative (in small amounts), stimulant (in large amounts), vermifuge, vulnerary.

**Main Uses** : Thyme is one of my favorite kitchen garden remedies - I always have the fresh herb growing in my garden or at least dried leaves stored in my apothecary cupboard. It's an herb I turn to again and again in the winter months as a gentle daily tonic to strengthen the immune system, clear the airways, and as a warm digestive support during the feasting of winter months. I also turn to Thyme again as winter is receding and spring emerging to help strengthen my respiratory system so that I'm ready for the breath of fresh air that a new season brings. In fact, I add Thyme to most of my respiratory tonics because it is pleasing in taste and effective in its actions as a decongestant expectorant (i.e. being able to clear out



mucous and help coughs be more effective). It is one of my favorite allies in removing respiratory infections from the body.

Thyme strengthens the immune system without being over-stimulating and protects against bacterias and microbes. It shows up in a lot of cold and flu blends, especially ones to alleviate fever, because of its immune-supporting nature but also because it opens up the airways, relieves inflammation, improves circulation, and helps to reduce fevers as a diaphoretic (i.e. it induces sweating to help cool the body). Thyme is a helpful aid for dry and hacking coughs, sore throats, general congestion, and asthma. Traditional western herbalism folklore tells stories of Thyme as one of the four ingredients in the infamous Four Thieves Vinegar which was said to protect thieves from getting infected with the plague when they were robbing houses of the deceased.<sup>1</sup> This speaks to Thyme's well-respected position within the traditional western herbalism materia medica as a reliable ally against infections and illnesses of all sorts.

I also like to use Thyme for nervous system health. Thyme is not classically categorized as a nervine, but it certainly acts like one, helping to relieve tension and mental exhaustion. It helps to bring heightened energy down and loosen tension. I like to include it in breathwork blends because it's both wonderfully aromatic and enhances the physical breathwork experience. I love what Herbalist Karen M. Rose has to say about Thyme and the breath: "It helps us develop a better relationship with time, connects us to our breath, and keeps us in the present. It is excellent for the fear associated with the out-breath release, causing tension and spasms in the lungs."<sup>2</sup> Thyme helps us to settle into our practice while gathering our inner resources and loosening our belief that there is not enough time for all the work that needs to be done. The herb also helps to improve memory, cognitive function, and concentration.

Thyme is a helpful herb for digestion. Look for signs of cold and sluggish digestion alongside poor absorption of nutrients. It can be a helpful herb to support the recovery from eating something you are allergic too accidentally (i.e. a sensitivity to a food that causes discomfort - Thyme is not a treatment for serious

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<sup>1</sup> Plot twist: Thyme probably wasn't in the original recipe.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Bartram, *Bartram's Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 1998), 421, and Scott Cunningham, *Cunningham's Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 2001), 243.



allergic reactions like anaphylactic shock) and for folks who are starting to adjust their diet after identifying allergens.

Use Thyme topically for skin conditions like athlete's foot, ringworm, and candida. Helps to clear up dandruff and improve overall scalp health. Use as a wash for insect bites and wounds, and as a compress or in a salve to help open up the airways. An excellent herb for herbal steams and baths. Create an herbal oil to use for sore muscles and aching joints.

**Magickal Uses :** Thyme is mentioned in both magickal and medical texts as an herb that aids in protecting against and relieving nightmares. Interestingly, English Herbalist Thomas Bartram simply lists the word "Nightmare" in his description of Thyme without any elucidation and Scott Cunningham notes that it is an herb which aids sleep in addition to preventing nightmares.<sup>3</sup> Thyme is an herb of cleansing ritual spaces prior to rituals and is a good offering to holy ones. Add to healing spells of all sorts. It's an herb traditionally associated with courage and can be used in spells to increase the bravery of the practitioner. Herbalist Karen M. Rose mentions that Thyme is an herb associated with the Dead.<sup>4</sup> Use in funerary rites and to aid the grief process.

Thyme is a plant of the Good Folk and can be planted in the garden to call them in and honor their presence. Place morning dew found on Thyme on your eyelids and lie upon a hill to try and meet the Good Folk.

**The Thyme Personality :** I think there are two folks primarily aided by Thyme - the first is the person who carries so much tension that it is affecting their ability to breathe deeply (see Thyme and breathwork description above) and the other is someone who may have been described in generations as a bit fae. They occupy a space between the worlds more comfortably than most, can easily drift off into daydream (often as a coping mechanism), and see things from what others consider to be odd angles. Thyme folk have often been belittled and bullied for their perceived oddness and can sometimes even feel like they're not quite human. Some readers are thinking right now, "Sounds like you're describing someone who is neurodivergent" and you're not incorrect - Thyme may be a good ally for many a

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<sup>3</sup> Karen M. Rose, *The Art & Practice of Spiritual Herbalism: Transform, Heal, & Remember with the Power of Plants and Ancestral Medicine* (Beverly, MA: Quarto Publishing, 2022), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Rose, 42.



neurodivergent folk. The Thyme mind can seem out-of-step with mainstream culture when perceived by members of that culture and try to protect themselves by denying their differentness or falling so deep into it that they struggle to connect with other folks.

As an ally, Thyme helps folk to arrive in the moment that they are in and create useful touchpoints or anchors to this world so that they can more easily move between their inner world and the outer world that they exist in. The movement of Thyme is one of fluidity, adaptability, and respect for the individual's experience. Thyme helps them to recognize their magick for the precious thing that it is and learn how to breathe deep into it, reassuring their nervous system, their heart, their self-perception that their difference is a gift.

**Contraindications** : Generally regarded as safe but avoid large amounts during pregnancy.

**Drug interactions** : None known.

**Dosage** : Standard dosage.



Notes

