

Thymus drucei

[Synonyms : *Thymus angustifolius*, *Thymus polytrichus* subsp. *britannicus*, *Thymus praecox* subsp. *arcticus*, *Thymus praecox britannicus*, *Thymus serpyllum*]

WILD THYME is an evergreen perennial. Native to western and northern Europe (including Britain) it has pinky-mauve flowers.

It is also known as *Backtimjan* (Swedish), *Banajwain* (Hindi), Bank thyme, Breath of God, Breckland thyme, Brotherwort, Christ's bedstraw, Christ's blood, Creeping thyme, English thyme, English wild thyme, *Gruwlys Gwyllt* (Welsh), *Hasha* (Urdu), Hillwort, Horse thyme, *Islandstimjan* (Swedish), *Kangasajuruoho* (Finnish), *Marisha* (Punjabi), *Mateřidouška úzkolistá* (Czech), *Materina dúška* (Slovak), Mother of thyme, Mother's thyme, Mountain thyme, Pellamountain, Penny mountain, *Quendel* (German), *Sand-Thymian* (German), *Serpilo* (Esperanto), *Serpolet* (French), Serpyllum, Shepard's thyme, Shepherd's thyme, *Smalbladeti Timian* (Danish), and *Thym bâtard* (French).

There are many varieties including *Thymus drucei* 'Citriodorus' which is strongly lemon scented, *Thymus drucei* 'Coccineus' which is faintly scented, *Thymus drucei* 'Doone Valley' which is lemon scented, *Thymus drucei* 'Lemon curd' which has a sweet lemon scent, *Thymus drucei* 'Minus' and *Thymus drucei* 'Snowdrift' which are faintly scented.

Drucei commemorates the name of an English pharmacist and botanist, George Claridge Druce (1850-1932), who in 1895 became the Fielding curator of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in the Department of Botany. From 1892 until his death he served on the Oxford City Council. He was Sheriff of Oxford in 1896 and 1897, and Mayor in 1900 to 1901. Druce was also made an Alderman and served as Chief Magistrate. He was a founder of the Northampton Natural History Society and the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire, and was an active member of both the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves and the Botanical Exchange Club. He was a Fellow of The Royal Society. His published works include *Flora of Oxfordshire*, *Flora of Berkshire*, *Flora of Buckinghamshire*, and *Flora of Northamptonshire*.

Wild thyme was always believed to be one of the fairies' flowers. In some European country areas it was also thought of as a love charm as young girls used to wear a tiny bunch of thyme, mint (*Mentha*) and lavender (*Lavandula*) to lure admirers.

A Christian legend holds that the fragrant plant was one of many that were supposed to have been used to make a bed for the Virgin Mary.

Thyme is well represented in English literature. One of the most famous relevant quotations comes from a play from the English bard, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this Oberon explains where Titania can be found

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips, and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with

Its growth is said to indicate clean air and as far back as Roman times its fragrance has been thought to raise the spirits.

Wild thyme is a bee plant and has been recognized as such for centuries.

As an emblem wild thyme is the badge of the Scottish Drummond clan.

At some point it reached North America (no doubt with early European settlers) and records show that some of the Delaware Indian tribe used it as an ingredient in a remedy for treating fever.

Today wild thyme provides an ingredient for the perfumery industry and can be used as a flavouring by the drinks industry.

Yet another of the plants subjected to the tenets encapsulated in the Doctrine of Signatures fashionable in the 16th Century this one was held to be associated with Venus and therefore of benefit in treating various nervous disorders.

Of all the species of thyme this one is believed to have the strongest medicinal qualities. It was not only recommended by herbalists for treating some female disorders and skin diseases but it was also taken as a tea to ward off bad dreams. In India it has been used to treat liver disorders, poor eyesight and stomach ailments. Wild thyme is used in proprietary medicines and in homoeopathic treatments