



Basil

Basil is also known as Sweet Basil. It is an annual herb which is native to India and Iran. In India it was thought to be a sacred herb. They believed that if a leaf of basil was buried with them, the basil leaf would be their passport to heaven. Basil is grown commercially in the Mediterranean and in California. The botanical name for Basil, *Ocimum basilicum*, is derived from the Greek "to be fragrant." Despite that meaning, many Greeks disliked basil and believed that scorpions would breed under pots of basil. In ancient Rome, the name for Basil was Basileus. This name was in reference to Basilisk, the fire breathing dragon. They thought that ingesting basil would protect them against Basilisk. In Haiti, basil is thought to belong to the goddess Erzulie, and in Italy, basil is thought of as a sign of love. In Romania if a young lady offers a young man a sprig of basil, and he accepts, they are officially engaged. Some people believe if you put some basil in your wallet, you will attract money, success and prosperity.



Chives

The gypsies of ancient times used chives in fortune telling. It was believed that you should hang bunches of dried chives around your house to ward off disease. Ancient Romans believed chives could relieve the pain from sunburn or a sore throat. They also believed that eating chives would increase blood pressure and increase urination. Marco Polo is credited with bringing chives to Europe from China.



Coriander & Cilantro

Coriander leaves are called cilantro. Coriander has been used by people for thousands of years and has been found in ancient Egyptian tombs dating back 3000 years. The Hebrews of biblical times used cilantro as the bitter herb in the Passover meal. The Roman soldiers under the reign of Julius Caesar took coriander with them, using it as a meat preservative and to flavor food. Coriander is also mentioned in *The Tales of the Arabian Nights*. Sugarplums as referred to in the *Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy*, were actually a treat made of sugar coated coriander. Coriander was introduced into the Americas around 1670 and was one of the first herbs grown by the colonists. This herb was believed to have a variety of medicinal uses and was thought to alleviate abdominal pains. Today the only medicinal use of coriander is as flavoring for certain prescription medicines to mask their taste and odor.



Dill

We get the modern word dill from the Norse word "dilla" which means "to lull" or "soothe." The ancient Greeks thought of dill as a sign of wealth. Hippocrates wrote of a recipe for cleaning the mouth in which you rinsed with dill seed which had been boiled in white wine. During the Middle Ages, dill was thought to have magical properties and was used against witchcraft. If someone thought a witch had cast a spell on them, they would make a special drink which contained dill leaves to protect themselves from the spell or wear a charm made from dill leaves. They also burned dill leaves to clear thunderstorms. Charlemagne had vials of dill tea available at dinners to stop the hiccups of guests.



Fennel

Fennel is a perennial or biennial herb. In ancient Greece, the word for fennel was *marathon*. This name is based on the Greek victory over the Persians in 470 B.C. at Marathon which was fought on a field planted with fennel. In Greek mythology, knowledge came to man as a gift from the gods in the form of a fiery coal held in a fennel stalk. The ancient Romans chewed fennel stalks in the belief that it would control obesity. In Medieval times, fennel was considered a sacred herb used to treat disease. Fennel was hung from the rafters to bring good luck, and put in keyholes to keep out ghosts and evil spirits. In American history, the Puritans thought of fennel as a "meeting seed." Meeting seeds were seeds of various herbs which parishioners chewed during church meetings to stay awake. Fennel was considered to be an appetite suppressant by the Puritans, and they would chew fennel seeds during periods of religious fasting to keep themselves from growing hungry. Fennel was thought to cure many different medical problems including snakebites, toothaches, earaches, and colic. Sprigs of fennel were believed to keep flies away when tucked into a horse's harness.



Marjoram & Oregano

Marjoram is also known as *Origanum* which is Greek for "mountain-joy." This herb was considered a favorite of Aphrodite. In Ancient Greece, it was believed that if you anointed yourself with marjoram, you would have dreams of a future spouse. They also believed that planting it on a grave would comfort the dead and ensure eternal peace and happiness. During ancient times, wreaths of marjoram crowned the heads of bridal couples to symbolize love, honor and happiness. Marjoram was used by Hippocrates as an antiseptic. The leaves of the plant were often chewed during the Middle Ages to relieve toothache, rheumatism, indigestion and coughs. In ancient Egypt it was used for healing and disinfecting.

Oregano is wild marjoram and has a stronger flavor. The English used oregano as an ingredient in snuff and as a perfume in sachets. Much of the marjoram referred to by the ancients was actually oregano.

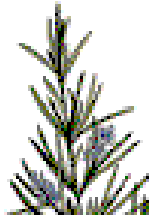
Mint

Many of the herbs had Greek myths surrounding them, and mint is no exception. According to the legend, Minthe, a nymph, was Hades' lover. Persephone, Hades' wife, found out about Minthe, and turned her into a low lying plant to be trod upon. Hades could not undo Persephone's spell, and whenever anyone stepped upon Minthe, the air would fill with a sweet perfume.



Parsley

In Greek mythology, parsley is said to have sprung from the Greek hero, Crchemorous. Winners at the ancient games were crowned with parsley. Parsley was used in Roman and Greek times as both a flavoring and garnish. It is used in the Hebrew celebration of Passover as a symbol of spring and rebirth. Parsley was used as far back as the times of Hippocrates as a medicine believed to help rheumatism, relieve kidney pains, and improve general health.



Rosemary

Rosemary is considered to be the herb of fidelity. If you sprinkle some around the house it is said to bring good luck and protection. Students in ancient Greece wore garlands of rosemary around their necks, or braided rosemary into their hair to improve their memory during exams. Rosemary has been used at weddings, funerals, and even to ward off the plague. Sir Thomas Moore believed the herb to be sacred to remembrance and friendship. In Hamlet, Ophelia said, "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance." According to legend, rosemary was used to awaken Sleeping Beauty.



Sage

Sage was a sacred ceremonial herb of the Romans and was associated with immortality. It was believed to increase mental acuity. Sage was used in the Middle Ages as a healing herb to treat fevers and epilepsy, memory loss, eye problems, infection, and intestinal problems. Charlemagne had it grown in his royal gardens.



Tarragon

Tarragon was used by the ancient Greeks to relieve toothaches. During the Middle Ages, tarragon was thought to cure snake bites because of the serpentine shape of its roots.



Thyme

The earliest recorded use of thyme was 3000 BC in Sumeria. The Sumerians used it as an antiseptic. The early Egyptians also used thyme in mummification. Thyme was a very popular herb during the days of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Greeks used it for massage and in bath oils, as incense, and for medicinal purposes. The Greeks often used the phrase "To smell of Thyme" as praise. Thyme was also considered the source of the best honey in ancient Athens. The ancient Romans would bathe in water scented with thyme before going into battle.

<http://www.geocities.com/sseagraves/historyherbs.htm>