

Description

Thyme Chicken Thymus Westmoreland Family: Lamiaceae

A perennial herb, Thyme Chicken is a small, woody shrub with loosely arranged, small, bright green elongated, almost spiky leaves along thin branched twigs. It also produces a tiny white-purple beak-like flower.

It acquired its name because of its milder flavor compared to other varieties of Thyme and is particularly suited to chicken dishes as the name suggests. Its willingness to spread and fill the space around it quickly makes it a favourite in borders and rock gardens.

Growing Tips

Thyme Chicken likes to grow in a sunny position and prefers neutral to alkaline soil with good drainage. The shrub can be cut back below the flower after the bloom dies down. It grows up to 30cm tall and for best results it must be planted 30cm apart. Its small purple and white flowers are a great attraction to bees and benevolent insects.

Parts Used

Leaves with stems

Uses

Thyme Chicken is perfect for Italian and Mediterranean cooking and is particularly good with chicken and turkey. A whole twig can be added to a casserole or sauce with the stem removed just before eating.

The dried leaves can be stored for up to a year and only a third of the quantity is needed compared to the fresh leaves.

The medicinal use of this herb in fungal and bacterial infections is mainly attributed to the Thyme Common, but the bitter quality of any Thyme promotes the digestion of fats.

Origin & History

Thyme originates in Western Mediterranean areas and was brought to Europe by the Romans who also added it to cheeses and liquors. It now grows wild in parts of South Canterbury.

The name Thyme has links to the Greek language where it meant "courage" or "to fumigate".

In ancient Egypt it was used for embalming and Roman soldiers inhaled its smoke or its steam when placed in baths to give them courage. Placed in a pillow, Thyme was said to induce sleep and ward off nightmares.

The oil was used in World War I to ease pain and as an antiseptic.

It also was believed that twigs of Thyme placed on coffins would assure safe passage into the spiritual world.

