



Diann's Herb Newsletter

WINTER 2015

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The International Herb Association selects the Herb of the Year. Here is a list of the ones starting from the beginning of the 21st century:

- 2015 Savory**
- 2014 Artemisia**
- 2013 Elder**
- 2012 Rose**
- 2011 Horseradish**
- 2010 Dill**
- 2009 Bay Laurel**
- 2008 Calendula**
- 2007 Lemon Balm**
- 2006 Pelargonium**
- 2005 Oregano**
- 2004 Garlic**
- 2003 Basil**
- 2002 Echinacea**
- 2001 Sage**
- 2000 Rosemary**

Here's flowers for you: hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram; The marigold.

A Winter's Tale
Act 4, Sc. 4
-Shakespeare

Savory, 2015 Herb of the Year

We generally think of savory as a type of food, not a herb. The herb savory is probably the best-kept secret in the herb world. Savory is native to the Mediterranean and southern Europe. One of the early settlers in America, John Josselyn included both summer and winter savory in a list of plants introduced to the New World by the English colonists to remind them of the gardens they had left behind. Savory has a remarkable history having been recommended by Virgil, the Roman poet, to be grown near bee-hives. Shakespeare mentioned savory, along with mints, marjoram, and lavender in *A Winter's Tale*. Savory is supposed to belong to the Satyrs, hence the Latin name *Satureia*.

Although there are at least fourteen to twenty species of savory, not many people are familiar with them except, possibly, summer savory (*Satureia hortensis*), which is an excellent seasoning especially if you must reduce your intake of salt. Other species include winter savory (*S. montana*), Aromata Savory (*S. hortensis 'Aromata'*), Midget Savory (*S. hortensis 'Midget'*), Creeping



Winter savory

Savory (*S. repandra*), Lemon Savory (*Micromeria biflora*). This article will focus on summer savory and winter savory, both culinary herbs.

Summer savory is a quick-growing annual, which grows twelve to eighteen inches. It grows into a lanky plant with soft spindly stems and thin, soft, sparsely-spaced gray-green leaves. It produces delicate light pink or white flowers between the leaves along the upper portions of the stems. Winter savory is an evergreen or semi-evergreen shrubby perennial with a bushy spreading habit, rarely taller than a foot and wider than it is tall. Its short, narrow leaves are thick, glossy, and tightly spaced on woody stems. Its flowers are also on the upper stems, but they are showier.

Growing savory is not difficult. It's best to start summer savory with seeds where you want it to grow. It does well in most soils, especially those with very good drainage. It must have plenty of sun and grows best if kept fertilized and well-watered. Winter savory, on the other hand, tolerates poor soil. It should be hardy to Zone 5. It does not like wet roots, so give it very good drainage.

To harvest summer savory cut sprigs about one-third of the way down the stems when it starts to bloom to prolong its life and encourage bushier growth. Cut winter savory back after it blooms to keep it bushy and productive. Keep cut savory in a re-sealable plastic bag in the vegetable crisper of your refrigerator. Nicholas Culpeper, a 17th century

herbalist, considered summer savory better than winter savory for drying.

Cooking with savory is very rewarding. Cook with summer savory in the summer and with winter savory in the months when summer savory is not in the garden. Both are known as the Bean Herb because savory gives an incomparable flavor to any dish made from beans. Tie a bundle of the sprigs together with a bay leaf or two and let it simmer with the beans, or chop the leaves and add them with onions and other flavorings. Savory, especially the summer variety, is also superb on green beans, runner beans, and fresh



fava beans. Add a tablespoon or two of the chopped leaves at any point in the cooking or toss them into dressings for bean salads. It's also good with other vegetables like cabbage, Brussels sprouts, onion, kale, summer squash, beets, and tomato, and it's delicious on roasted potatoes or in potato salad. Add it to marinades and herb rubs for beef, lamb, pork, and chicken before they're roasted or grilled. Savory is always a good addition to hearty braised dishes, especially those with red wine. Summer savory and winter savory are deliciously aromatic and definitely not sweet; however, winter savory's flavor is markedly hotter and more biting than that of summer savory. It does better if added at the beginning of cooking; whereas, summer savory may be added at anytime. For garnishing it has been used as a substitute for parsley and chervil.

Medicinal uses of savory have also been recorded. It has aromatic and flatulence-fighting properties. It is also considered a warming herb. It was formerly deemed a remedy for the colic and was also thought to be a good expectorant. Both old authorities and modern gardeners agree that a sprig of either of the savories rubbed on wasp or bee stings gives instant relief. Maybe that's why Virgil said it should be planted near bee hives.

-some information from Jerry Trunfeld, *The Herbfarm Cookbook*

Herbal Workshops and Symposium

The Schedule of Herbal Workshops for 2015 will be available later in January and will be posted at www.diannsgreenhouse.com.

I will be presenting at the Herb Symposium April 25 at the Riverview Hotel. More information about the Herb Symposium at www.naturalchoicesbotanica.com.

Market News

The Winter Market at Smith-Trahern Mansion continues each Friday from 9 AM to 1 PM. I will try to be there with dried herb products, herb plants, books, and 2015 herb calendars. See you there on the following dates: Jan. 16, 30, Feb. 13, 27, Mar. 13, 27, Apr. 10, 24, May 8.

2015 Herb Calendar

The 2015 Herb Calendar created by Susan Belsinger features many beautiful pictures of herbs, recipes, and informative essays about the history and benefits of herbs. Call me (931-648-8701) to reserve one.

What do you
suppose? A bee sat
on my nose.
Then what do you
think?
He gave me a wink
And said, "I beg
your pardon.
I thought you were
the garden."

-English Rhyme

Mercury claims
dominion
over this herb.
Keep it dry by you all
the year,
if you love yourself
and your ease,
and it is
a hundred pounds to
a penny,
if you do not.

-Nicholas Culpeper

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Recipes

Savory Potato Gratin (6 servings)

2 pounds Yukon gold or russet potatoes
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt
¼ cup finely chopped shallot
¼ cup coarsely chopped summer savory, or 2 tablespoons chopped
winter savory
1 cup (3 ounces) shredded Gruyere
¾ cup whole milk

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Peel and rinse the potatoes and slice them about 1/16-inch thick, as if for potato chips. It's easiest to do this on a mandolin, but if you don't have one, use the slicing blade of a food processor. It's possible to cut them thinly and evenly with a chef's knife, but quite challenging.

Smear the butter on the bottom and sides of a 10-inch-round shallow baking dish or glass pie plate. Arrange about one-third of the potato slices in concentric circles over the bottom of the dish. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt, 2 tablespoons of the shallots, one-third of the savory, and one-third of the cheese. Repeat the process with another third of the potatoes and the same toppings, then finish with a layer of potatoes and sprinkle with the remaining teaspoon salt, the savory, and cheese. Pour the milk over the top.

Bake the gratin for 40 to 45 minutes, or until deeply browned all over. Serve in wedges from the baking dish, or let the gratin cool slightly and slide it out onto a platter.

-Jerry Traunfeld, *The Herbal Kitchen*

Vegetable seasoning Mix

3 Tablespoons dried parsley
2 Tablespoons dried basil
1 Tablespoon dried oregano
1 Tablespoon dried savory

Mix herbs and use with any vegetable dish. Store extra herb-mixture in an air-tight jar.

Egg & Chicken Dish Herb Mix

1 Tablespoon summer savory
1 Tablespoon tarragon
1 Tablespoon chervil
1 Tablespoon chives
1 Tablespoon basil

This mixture may be added to any egg or chicken dish.

-mixtures from Carol Asher, *Especially Herbs*

