



HERBS  
OF THE  
BIBLE

BY  
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In the Bible there are allusions to herbs and spicy plants used for culinary, medicinal, prophylactic, cosmetic, and worship purposes.

### Floors of churches

were earthen or made of uneven stones making them difficult to sweep. Instead, they were strewn with sweet-smelling herbs. Rushes and meadow hay were sufficient for ordinary days, but special days were honored with sweet flag, mints, marjoram, thyme, basil, and other expensive plants.



Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it. Proverbs 15:17

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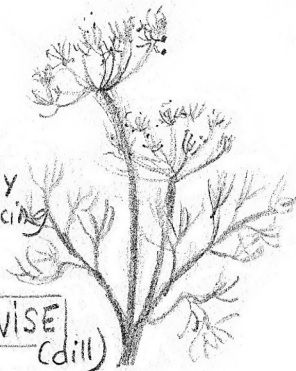
## ANGELICA "the herb of the angels"

It is also known as the herb of the Holy Ghost. When whole populations were threatened by pestilence, Angelica was used to dispel the plague.



Dill, wrongly translated as "anise" was used medicinally and as a flavoring. In denouncing the Pharisees Christ says: "Ye tithe mint and anise and cummin and have left undone the weightier things of the law"

Matthew 23:23



ANISE  
(dill)



### BALM (balsam)

...they traded in thy market.... honey, and oil,  
and balm. EZEKIEL 27:17



Balm or balsam is the gum or thickened  
juice from the tree. It is believed  
that the Queen of Sheba brought the  
roots to King Solomon. It was so  
valuable that it was protected by  
guards.



"... carry down a little  
present, a little balm, and a  
little honey, gum, myrrh,  
pistachio nuts, and almonds."

Genesis 43:11

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## BITTER HERBS

The dandelion was one of the bitter herbs of the Old Testament along with endive, chicory, lettuce, and sorrel. At the feast of The Passover bitter herbs were eaten with the lamb and unleavened bread.



Pilgrims on their way to celebrate the Passover



## CASSIA



"..... Take thou also unto thee principal  
Spices,.... of cassia five hundred shekels,..."

Exodus 30: 23

The cassia is a fragrant tree resembling  
the Cinnamon, though less delicate in taste.

Cinnamon belongs to the laurel  
family, and grows to 30 feet.

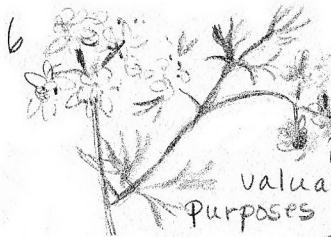
".... and of sweet smelling  
cinnamon half as much, that is  
two hundred and fifty, .... "

Exodus 30: 23

Cinnamon is obtained from the  
inner bark ... the strips are wrapped  
around a thin rod, and the outer  
skin scraped off.



CINNAMON



## CORIANDER

the coriander grows wild in Palestine, the seeds contain a valuable oil for flavoring and medicinal purposes



## COSTMARY (SWEET MARY)

It is also known as Bible Leaf because its leaves were used as book marks in the Bible.

The plant has been dedicated to the Virgin Mary



Mary Magdalene used Costmary to make precious ointment.



# FLAX



the flax plant, with its beautiful blue flowers, is used to make linen, the oldest of all textile fibers. In early times the crop was pulled by the roots, steeped in water until the outer part of the stems decayed, then they were split and combed until threads were separated and peeled off the stalk.



Flax supplied the linen used as swaddling clothes of the infant Jesus, as well as his burial clothes. Joseph was clothed by Pharaoh in ("vestments of fine linen")

Flaxseed or linseed has been used as medicine - for poultices for pleurisy and drawing thorns, in cough medicine and linemen.



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## HYSSOP

origanum maru

Hyssop, a marjoram in the mint family, has Golden flowers and small leaves. It holds water well. Moses said: ... "ye shall take a bunch of Hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel..."

EX. 12:21,22




This hyssop is in the Bible as "Jerusalem corn". Grains were gathered and ground into meal. It is a tall plant with strong stems and was used to raise "a sponge with vinegar..." to Christ on the cross.



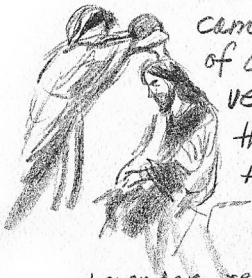
HYSSOP  
sorghum vulgare

## LADIES' BEDSTRAW



Ladies' bedstraw is a fragile, trailing vine which makes a soft material to sleep on. It is known as the manger herb and was also used to combat fatigue.

The spikenard of the Bible is lavender.... "a woman came with an alabaster jar of ointment of pure spikenard, very costly, and broke the jar and poured it over his head..." Mark 3



## LAVENDER

Lavender represents purity and virtue

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## MANDRAKE



The mandrake belongs to the potato family. In early spring it has a circle of large spinach-like leaves and later creamy yellow flowers, then bright red fruit like a tomato. The dark brown root is enormous and resembles a human body.

Mandrake was supposed to cure barrenness.



"..... Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes .... And God remembered Rachel .... And she conceived, and bare a son. Called his name Joseph..."

GENESIS 30: 14, 22



## MINT



Garden mint, peppermint, and Pennyroyal were grown in Palestine. Mint was served with meat dishes, especially at the Feast of the Paschal Lamb. It grew so well in the Holy Land that it covered banks and ditches.



Mint leaves were strewn on the floors of Synagogues so that every footfall was scented.



## MUSTARD



hot powder from ground mustard flavored meat.

"The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

MATTHEW  
13:31,32

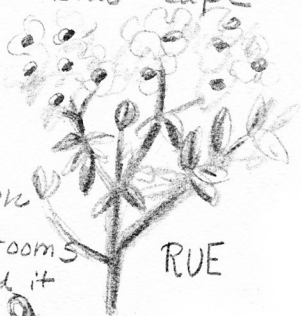


## ROSEMARY



In early Christian times rosemary or rosemary was associated with the Virgin Mary. It was said that the blossoms turned from white to soft blue after they had been touched by her blue cape.

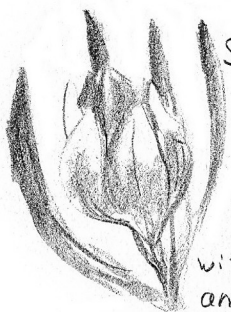
In the Holy Land rue grows five feet tall with clusters of yellow flowers. It was called the "herb of grace", a protection against evil. They hung it in rooms to ward off disease and sprinkled it over the floors.



RUE

It was placed at the feet of statues of the Virgin Mary.





# SAFFRON

Saffron was very important as a  
Condiment and sweet perfume.

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,  
with pleasant fruits; Camphire, with spikenard...  
and saffron; calamus and cinnamon....."  
Song of Solomon 4:13

Saffron consists of the orange-red pollen which  
clings to the anthers inside the lovely lavender cup  
of the autumn crocus. It is dried, pounded with  
mortars, and packed into a cake. Only a small amount  
can be made from a field of bloom.



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## SAGE

Labiatae, the Greek name for Sage means Camel's tongue, and the soft, oval leaves do resemble the tongue of an animal.

Sage is said to be a symbol of immortality.

It has been used for flavoring and medicinally since ancient times. After a pestilence the people of ancient Egypt prescribed the use of sage tea for their women so as to make them more fertile to replenish their losses.

## THYME




Thyme is a symbol of bravery.

It has always been a fine cooking herb.

In ancient times it was recognized that the flesh of sheep fed on thyme was superior to that of ordinary mutton.



It also flavored honey.



## VERVAIN

The name vervain means "Sacred herb".

Some of its common names are: holy plant, herb of the Cross, herb of grace, pilgrim's cross.



"Bitter as wormwood" is often used in the Bible. The Israelites

hated bitter flavors and gall and wormwood were the worst they could think of.

"For her lips drop honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood..." Proverbs 5:3-4

WORMWOOD

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Hezekiah measured his valuables in spices as well as in silver, gold, and armor. II Kings 20:13

During religious festivals sacrificed animals were filled with fragrant unguents to disguise the odor of burning flesh and also to keep flies and vermin away.



When there were no ice boxes to keep food fresh, the meats and fish were strongly spiced with herbs to disguise the taste of decomposition.



Thyme, lavender, bee balm, balm, marjoram, Rosemary, Sage, and Savorý were often planted near bee hives to flavor honey.





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