

Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By Candy Mullen  
“Historical Herbs, part one”

***“Are you going to Scarborough Faire?  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.  
Remember me to one who lives there  
For once she was a true love of mine.”***

Do you remember this song? It is as old as the Middle Ages and talks about the Scarborough Fair started a thousand years ago in North Yorkshire, England. It was a 45 day trading event starting on August 15<sup>th</sup>. People came from all over England and some from the continent as well to do business. The herbs from the song spoke to the imagination of the medieval people as much as red roses do to us today. They symbolize virtues the singer wishes his true love and himself to have. Lets discuss the four herbs in the opening lines.

**Sage:** Sage was a sacred ceremonial herb of the Romans and is associated with immortality and strength. In the Middle Ages, Charlemagne grew it in the royal gardens and it was used to treat fevers and epilepsy, memory loss, eye problems, infections, and intestinal problems. It was believed to increase mental acuity. It is a *salvia* and is a highly aromatic shrub-like perennial. Many varieties of color exist and it has square stems. It needs full sun, loose and sandy alkaline soil; don't over water! Its companions in the garden are rosemary, lavender, and thyme. It grows very well in our Central Texas climate.

**Rosemary:** It is the herb of fidelity and protection, faithfulness, love and remembrance. Students in Ancient Greece wore garlands of rosemary or braided it into their hair to improve memory during exams. It has been used at weddings {English custom still has sprigs braided into the hair today}, funerals, and even to ward off the plague! It is sacred to remembrance and friendship. It is associated with feminine love as it is very strong and tough. According to legend, rosemary was used to awaken Sleeping Beauty.

It is a perennial with many varieties, either upright or creeping. It has highly aromatic, needle-like leaves with blue, white or pink flowers. It needs full sun, well draining alkaline soil, and little water. It also deters many harmful insects but attracts bees for pollination. The best companions are sage, dill, and cabbage. It loves Central Texas'climate!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)