

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER  
Tip of the Week  
By Beverly Wickersham  
“An Introduction to Herbs”

First, what is the correct pronunciation of the word “herb”?

Is the *h* pronounced? Or is it silent? Americans tend to be divided on the pronunciation. In America, Southerners have always preferred to pronounce the *h* as do the British. However, it is equally correct to leave the *h* silent. Therefore, one may speak of a herb or an herb. Regional custom, rather than correctness, dictates the pronunciation.

Second, what is the definition of a herb?

A herb or (an herb) is a herbaceous (non-woody) plant that displays one or more of these characteristics:

1. Adds flavor to foods
2. Heals wounds and soothes pain.
3. Sweetly and often pungently scents our surroundings

Herbs are divided into two large categories: Culinary Herbs and Medicinal Herbs. However, herbs frequently overlap the categories. For example, a favorite culinary herb is Dill, a member of the Umbelliferae family, whose flowers have an umbrella-like shape.

Its culinary uses include pickle making and fish broiling. It is also a favorite in salads and on new potatoes. Medicinally, it has long been used in Europe in a tea to sooth a baby’s colic.

Garden sage is a popular culinary herb used and known throughout the world. Did you use it at Thanksgiving to season the turkey and dressing? This common sage has long been used as a cure-all. In the Middle Ages, it took the place of the aspirin.

Thyme (pronounced “time”) came to America with the earliest settlers. There are numerous varieties of this favorite culinary and medicinal plant. Thymes are either upright sub-shrubs 12 to 18 inches tall, or creeping plants that are divided into two categories: those growing up to 6 inches tall and those very flat creepers only 1 to 2 inches tall. Medicinally, thyme has been used to treat nervous ailments, queasiness of the stomach and “uneasiness” of the brain. They have beautiful flowers also.

Add a few common or uncommon herbs to your landscape, and then dig out the recipes!

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

Source: [Southern Herb Growing](#) by Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay

