

Grow Sage for Savory Flavor and Barnyard Use



When you plant your herb garden don't forget to grow sage. Many varieties are available in seed and started plants. The Mediterranean varieties such as pineapple sage are great for teas and also fragrance uses like potpourri. The botanical name for sage is *Salvia officinalis*. When you start to grow sage, you will appreciate it's fragrance and the pretty purple stems of flowers that it produces. Sage plants are members of the fragrant mint family. Personally, I love to grow sage because of the beautiful dusky green leaves. Sage brings a unique size and texture to my herb garden. One of my larger sage plants has over wintered the last three years, making it one of my first harvested herbs each spring.

How to Grow Sage

You will have more success with this herb if you grow sage in a well drained area of the garden or a container with good drainage. I have read that it is difficult to grow from seed, although I have not tried it. I have bought my plants from local nurseries. You can also root cuttings from a plant to start new sage plants.

Where to Grow Sage

Sage is happy to be in the sunshine and warmth does not bother it at all. It is considered a hardy plant. We are gardening in zone 7 and our sage commonly over winters and produces early in the spring.



How to Over Winter Your Sage Plants

Sage is not technically a perennial plant although it is classified as a perennial herb. A perennial plant, by definition dies out and comes back for over two years. In my garden, sage doesn't totally die out and come back. It just never dies. Our herb garden is in a protected area sheltered by the house on one side and a raised garden bed on the other. When we fully reach winter weather, I bring the sage plant container into the screen porch by the back door. If we get really cold weather, I will cover the plant. Being close to the house and protected keeps it from fully dying out. The sage plant does become dormant, waiting for the slight warmth of early spring to grow new leaves. I rarely water the plant over the winter. It gets some moisture when storms force rain or snow into the porch. Other than my benign neglect, the sage waits.

How to Use Sage from the Garden

Sage is often used as a digestive aid. Perhaps this is why people started using it as a flavoring herb when cooking heavy or fatty cuts of meat. We often use sage in the dressing for the holiday turkey dinner and combined with rosemary and mint when cooking lamb.

Sage can be used dry or fresh. To dry, harvest the clean leaves from the plant. (I don't over harvest any of my herbs as they keep growing all season long) Many methods of drying will work for sage. If you have a dehydrator, lay the sage leaves in a single layer on each tray. Dehydrate on a low setting until the leaves are crunchy and fully dry.

Air drying is another method of preserving the sage leaves. You can use screens, racks, or some other means that allows plenty of air to circulate over and under the leaves. Be on the lookout for molding. Discard moldy leaves.

Hanging bunches of herbs is another method but it takes a long time to dry herbs this way. I do like the decorative look that bunches of herbs hanging in my kitchen brings to my home. I would recommend only trying a couple of bunches dried this way, so you don't lose your whole harvest to mold or dust.

Oven drying is possible if your oven can be set to a very low temperature (under 110F) and the temperature kept steady. Herbs are sensitive to high heat and can lose their flavor and beneficial qualities if dried in a high heat.

A dehydrator is a good investment piece of equipment if you are planning to do a lot of preserving from your herb garden.



tri-color sage from A Farm Girl in the Making

Other Qualities and Properties of Sage

Sage has many nutritional and beneficial medicinal qualities. Sage is high in antioxidants, and astringent properties. That is what makes sage the choice for drying infected wounds, drying up breast milk, and fighting infection. Digestion is helped by sage. Sage is used in teas for the relief of hormonal issues, high cholesterol, relief of stress, and overall health and immunity building. Sage can be combined with rosemary, parsley and mints for strong teas that help fight inflammation. While mostly safe as a medicinal herb, sage has a few cautions.

Cautions – Use in pregnancy and while nursing is not suggested. Sage can be used as a tea for drying up milk flow in lactation. Epileptics should not be treated with sage remedies.

Does Sage make you smarter?

Ketones in the volatile oil from sage has been shown to increase the cognitive ability of the brain. Sage increases memory ability and has been shown to help with depression.



Sage Use in Animal Care

Generally, sage is safe for use on livestock and pets with a few cautions. Sage can be harmful during gestation so it is best to not treat any breeding animals internally, with sage. Making a salve or ointment is the better route. You can check out how to make a simple salve in this post. Feeding sage to your chickens is thought to reduce the presence of internal parasites. In the rabbit hutches, sage sprinkled around the area can help repel fleas.

A salve or powdered dried sage would be useful in the barnyard for umbilical cord drying, wound care, and general antiseptic external use.

In any situations where you are unsure about using a herb for your pet or livestock animal, consult your veterinarian. Animals process plants and medicines differently than humans

so it is better to be cautious if unsure.

