
ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH386



THYME PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

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INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Common thyme
- Scientific name: *Thymus vulgaris*
- Native to Europe, North Africa, and Asia
- Grows to 8 inches in height
- Small, oval, evergreen leaves arranged in opposite pairs
- Lavender flowers appear in dense terminal heads in June and July
- Hardy to zone 4
- Commonly used in French, Italian, and Caribbean cuisines
- Used to treat respiratory infections, including whooping cough
- Has antibacterial and antifungal properties

- Over 350 species in the genus *Thymus*

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Prefers full sun and well drained media
- Low water requirement
- Prefers neutral or alkaline media; add lime if media is acidic
- In cold climates, mulch heavily to protect plants during winter

PROPAGATION

- Sow in early spring during dry, mild weather

- Sow seeds about ½ inch deep and 8 inches apart; cover evenly with media
- Can be propagated by dividing old roots or taking cuttings
- Take care to water new cuttings well
- Cuttings can be taken throughout the growing season, from May to September

DISORDERS

- Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*)
 - Remove affected plants
- Susceptible to root rot (*Rhizoctonia solani*) and other fungal diseases in damp conditions
 - Make sure soil is well drained
 - Remove infected plants

CONSUMER CARE

- During the first year, harvest sparingly
- Leaves can be harvested throughout the summer, but the flavor is best just before flowering
- To dry, cut stems just as the flowers begin to open
- Dried thyme retains its flavor better than many herbs
- Slow to release flavor; usually added early in the cooking process
- When cooking, use 1/3 as much dried as fresh thyme
- Good growing companion with lavender

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Thymus vulgaris* (Common thyme or Garden thyme): commonly used culinary herb
 - ‘English Wedgewood’: fragrant, dark green leaves with good flavor; makes a good knot garden hedge
- *Thymus herba-verona* (Caraway thyme): used both as a culinary herb and as groundcover
- *Thymus citriodorus* (Citrus thyme): cultivars with flavors of various citrus fruit
- *Thymus pseudolanuginosus* (Woolly Thyme): grown as ground cover
- *Thymus serpyllum* (Wild Thyme): important nectar source for honeybees

References

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyme>
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<http://www.gardenguides.com/plants/info/herbs/thyme.asp>
<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mg/mh/t/thygar16.html>

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