



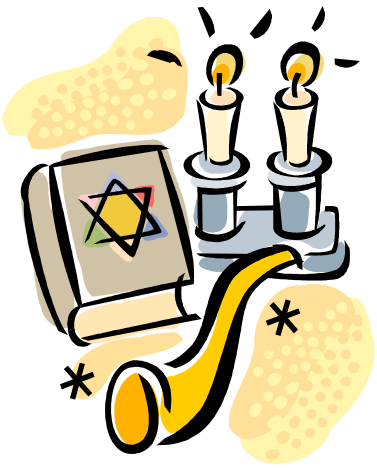
# HERBS OF THE BIBLE

DONNA FRAWLEY  
FRAWLEY'S FINE HERBARY



# HERBS OF THE BIBLE

## GARDENERS



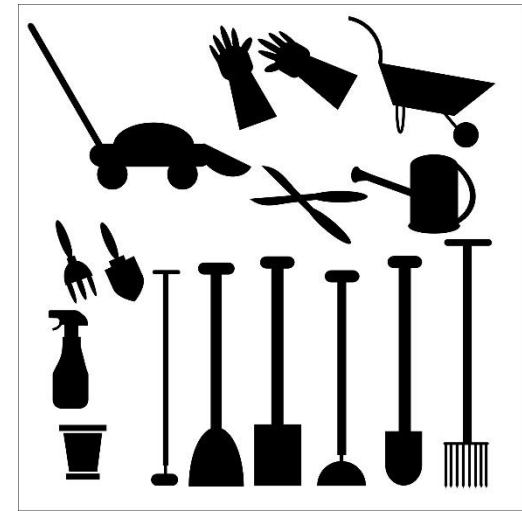
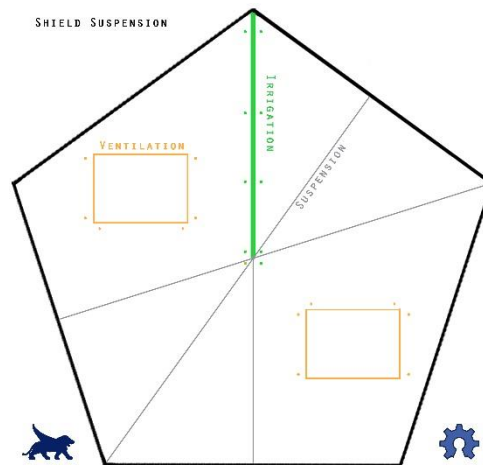
There were many gardeners in the Bible. Adam was the first, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." Genesis 2: 15. He learned a lot while he was there and used that knowledge after he was kicked out. His son, Cain, was a vegetable gardener.

Solomon was a plant lover, but as King he had gardeners to do the work.

Isaiah knew about taking cuttings. "Therefore, though you set out the finest plants and plant imported vines, though on the day you set them out, you make them grow, and on the morning when you plant them, you bring them to bud" (Isaiah 17:10 & 11).

Paul was very knowledgeable of gardening techniques when he talks about grafting and pruning.

The Egyptians were great gardeners and made gardens for enjoyment but also as a resting place for their spirits after death. Their belief was that spirits left their tombs and came to the gardens "in the cool of the day" to enjoy the shade and water of the garden. They made sure the gardens were made beautiful while they were alive so they would have a beautiful resting place in death.



# GARDENS IN PALESTINE

The gardens in Palestine had additional requirements to our gardens of sun, water and food. They were: shade from the heat of the day and a wonderful scent which was prized at that time, considering the lack of running water, bar soap and deoderant. Gardens of the Bible were traditionally a luxury of the wealthy.

The herb gardens referred to in Deuteronomy 11, are believed to be a checkerboard pattern where many different kinds of vegetables were grown. These gardens used this design so they could be irrigated, "... watered it with your feet, like a garden of vegetables," Deut.11:10. There were royal courtyard gardens in the story of Esther. The hanging gardens of Babylon were built, probably by captured Jews, under the direction of King Nebuchadnezzar II for his favorite wife. They were terraced roof gardens not really "hanging" but considered one of the 7 wonders of the world.

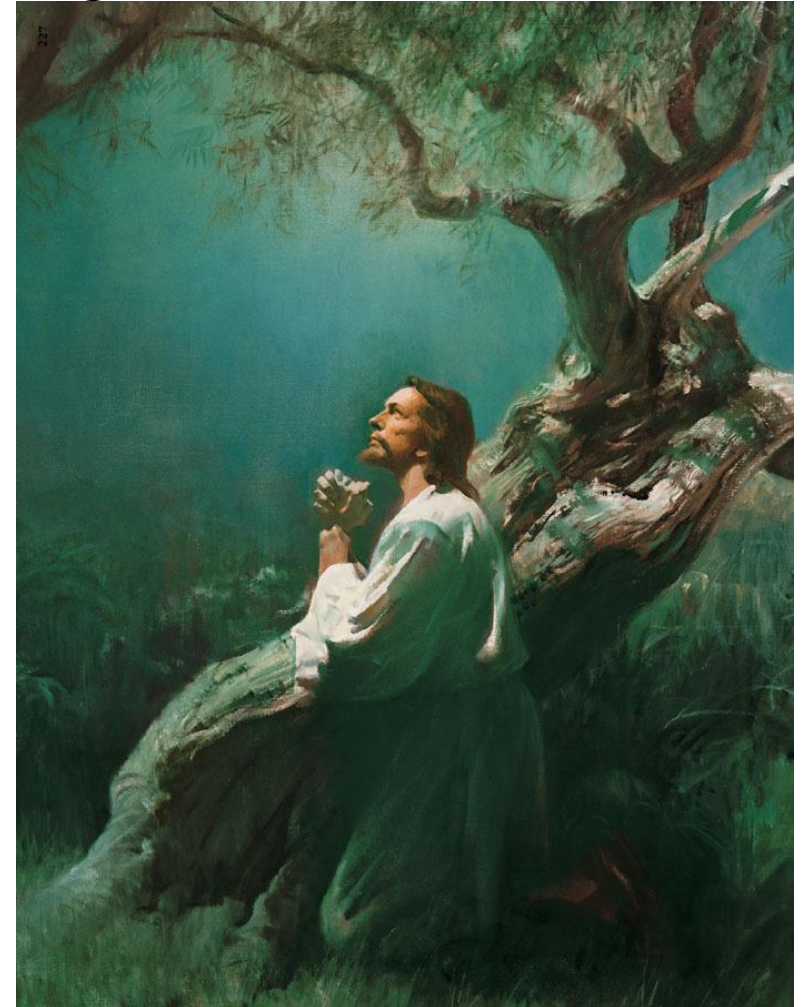


Soloman was a great plant-lover. And as most plant lovers, he collected as many different specimens as he could from the known world. Although the known world at that time was smaller than it is now, his gardens were vast, containing sweet smelling shrubs of aloes, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, saffron and spiknard (a relative to the red and white Valerian of today). Arbors were made, covered with grape vines, to give shade so people could sit and eat meals under them.



Gardens of Jerusalem were outside the city walls. Besides the busyness of the city, the fact that the temple or Holy Place was there might have dictated they be located outside the walls. In Moses time there were "secret gardens" where men and women might sin in secret. The gardens were banned then, because of this. Human manure was used to feed the soil in those days and keeping that outside the walls was much preferred.

However, Jesus did find rest and quiet in the Garden of Gethsemane and "often met there with his disciples." John 18:2. He was buried in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea and was mistaken for the gardener by Mary looking thru tear-filled eyes Easter morning.



# USEFULNESS OF HERBS

Herbs in Biblical times were used in their every day lives. They were used in **medicine** (Ex. anise, caraway, cardamom, cassia, coriander, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, mustard, onions, poppy seed, saffron, sesame and thyme) , **cosmetic ointments** (myrrh), **aromatic oils** (calamus, frankincense, myrrh), **perfumes** (spikenard), **fumigation** (hyssop), **religious rituals** (hyssop), **embalming**, and **cooking**. Embalming was done to appease the gods of death. The bodies were preserved by cleansing the interior of the abdomen and rinsing it with fragrant spices like anise, cassia, cinnamon, cumin, marjoram and myrrh. Herbs used for cooking were basil, chervil, cumin, coriander, dill, marjoram, mint, oregano, poppy seed, savory and tarragon. As you can see, herbs touched every aspect of their lives. Their importance made them valuable, to the extent that they even paid their taxes with them.

# HERBS AND BIBLE REFERENCES

**BALM:** Genesis 37: 25 Jeremiah 8: 22; 46: 11; 51: 8  
Ezekiel 27: 17

“As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.”  
Genesis 37:25.

This is Lemon Balm. Not the balm of the Bible, but fun to grow in our garden and use.





**CORIANDER:** “The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.” Exodus 16: 31. Numbers 11:7  
Coriander was used as medicine and the appearance of the white flowers were similar to the way the manna looked when it was gathered. Today we use the leaves of coriander and we call them by the Spanish name, cilantro which we use in many Mexican dishes. The seeds of coriander are crushed and are one of the ingredients in Curry Powder and can be used in baking.

**CUMIN:** “When he has leveled the surface does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin?”

“Caraway is not threshed with a sledge nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a stick.” Isaiah 28: 25, 27. Matthew 23:23

Cumin is used similarly today as in Biblical times. It is mixed with bread or meat or sprinkled on cakes. Today it is an ingredient in chili powder and flavors chutney, pickles and sausage.





**DILL:** “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” Matthew 23: 23.

Dill seed and weed (leaves) were used for medicine and for culinary purposes. Today we use them in pickling spices, in bread, fish and potato salad.





**FRANKINCENSE:** Exodus 30: 34 Leviticus 24: 7 “Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

Matthew 2: 11.

Frankincense is a resin from a tree. The trunk is slit and the resin oozes out, dries and is scraped off. This was a very important ingredient in incense. Using it on the sacrificial fires of the Old Testament was two-fold. It would cover up the burned flesh smell of the animal sacrifice and it would make smoke that would rise up to heaven so the sacrifice would be honored by God. It was one of the gifts of the Magi to foretell of Jesus sacrificial death. Today it is still used as incense. It can be melted on a low burner in a washed out tuna can and the fragrance will be released.

**HYSSOP:** “Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the door-frame.” Exodus 12: 22. Leviticus 14: 4, 6, 51, 52 Numbers 19: 6 I Kings 4: 33 “...put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.” John 19: 29. Hebrews 9: 19

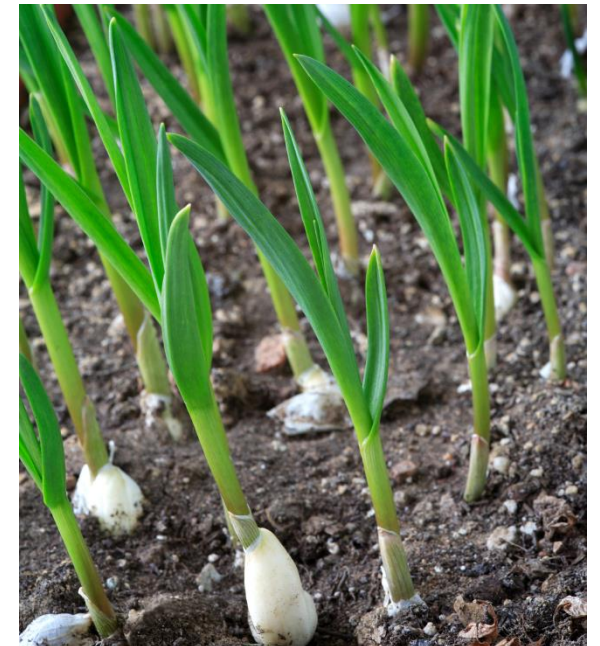
Hyssop was used at the first Passover to paint the lamb’s blood on the door posts and lintel of each door of the Israelites home so the angel of death would “pass over” and spare the life of the first born. It was also used to fumigate rooms where sick people or lepers were. Today it can be used fresh in salads or the flowers dry nicely.



**LEEKs AND ONIONS (CHIVES):** “...The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat! ...also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic...” Numbers 11: 1 – 6

The Israelites got tired of manna and wanted to be back in slavery eating melons, leeks, onions and garlic. Sometimes you just can't please anyone. Chives are in this family and are one of the herbs grown by most gardeners.

We use these as culinary herbs on salads, vinegar, in breads, in soups, as well as garnishes.





**MINTS:** Matthew 23: 23 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practice the latter without leaving the former undone.” Luke 11: 42. The mint family is a very big family. Because of the wonderful fragrance and flavor of mints it was used very similarly as we use it today: as air fresheners, hair rinses, as tea and many culinary uses.



**MUSTARD:** “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”  
Matthew 13: 31, 32 17: 20 Mark 4: 30 - 33  
Luke 13: 19

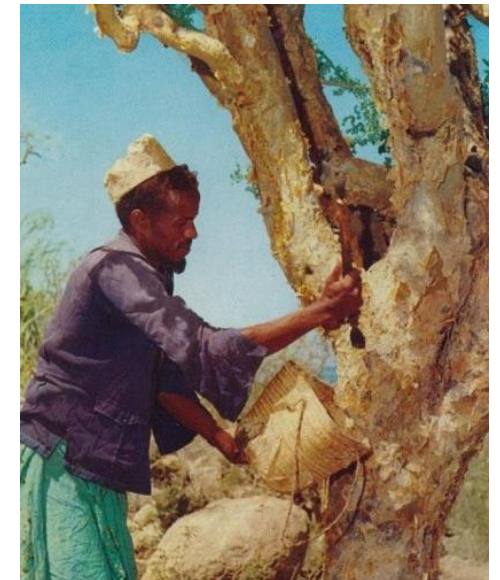
Mustard seed is the reference in the Bible. A small seed that grows as big as a tree to shelter birds. Faith the size of a mustard seed can grow and move mountains. We use mustard seed in sausages, pickling spices, in salads and as the main ingredient in our prepared mustards.

**MYRRH:** Genesis 37: 25: 43: 11 Exodus 30: 23 Ester 2: 12 Psalms 45: 8  
Proverbs 7: 17 Matthew 2: 11 Mark 15: 23

“He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy five pounds.”

John 19: 39

Myrrh was used similarly to frankincense but it had 5 times the value of frankincense and it was also used as an ingredient in anointing oil. Another gift of the Magi and it foretold of the bitter suffering and death of Jesus and was used as one of the embalming ingredients along with aloes, cassia and cinnamon. Today myrrh oil is used as an astringent in mouthwash and a fragrance in creams and lotions.





**RUE:** “Woe to you Pharisees, because you gave God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God...” Luke 11: 42. It was believed to heal the stings of bees, wasps and scorpions. It was used for seasoning dishes.





**SAGE:** “The made a lampstand of pure gold and Hammered it out, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, Buds and blossoms were of one piece with it. Six Branches extended from the sides of the lampstand – Three on one side and three on the other.”  
Exodus 37: 17 and 18

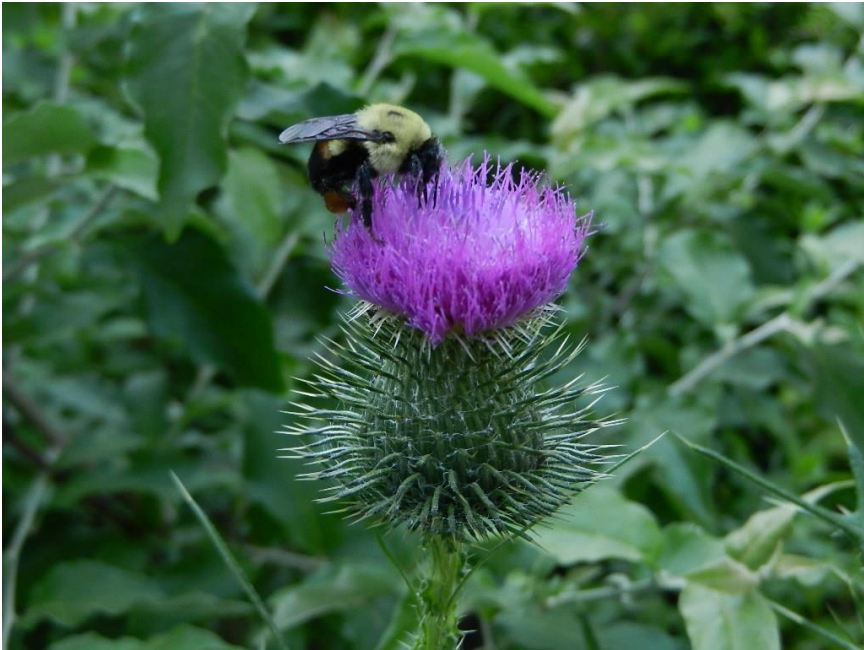




**SORREL:** “That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.” Exodus 12: 8

Sorrel is one of the herbs that is the first to come up in the spring. It has a lemony flavor and is considered one of the bitter herbs eaten with the roasted lamb on Passover night. Other bitter herbs are chicory, endive, parsley and watercress. In the Passover celebration bitter herbs signify the bitter life in slavery.

**THISTLE:** “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, [You should not eat of it,] ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.’” Genesis 3: 17 - 18





**THYME:** “and she gave birth to her first-born, a son. She wrapped him in coths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke 2: 7

Thyme grew prolifically in the Holy Lands. Because of its abundance, it was used as food for the animals and was therefore in the manger where Jesus was laid. Today thyme is a wonderful addition to any chicken dish, rice, bread, stuffing and salads.





**WORMWOOD:** Deuteronomy 29: 18  
“He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall... I remember my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.”  
Lamentations 3: 15 & 19  
Used to make the alcoholic beverage – absinthe.  
Also used as a moth repellent.

## **HERBS THAT ARE CONNECTED TO THE BIBLE**

**COSTMARY:** Bible leaf. Keep bugs out of the Bible, also to revive parishioners during long sermons.

**HOREHOUND:** From Palestine, offers a wish for good health.

**HORSERADISH:** Used on the Sedar Plate for Passover.

**JUNIPER:** Protected the Holy Family when they were pursued by Herod's soldiers.

**LADY'S BEDSTRAW:** Said to be the straw used in the manger.

**LAVENDER:** An herb beloved by Mary, represents purity and virtue.

**PENNYROYAL:** Said to bloom at Midnight on Christmas Eve.

**ROSEMARY:** For remembrance, changed it's flowers from white to blue when Mary laid her cloak over it.

# HOW WE USE SOME BIBLICAL HERBS TODAY

**BASIL** – Cut in salads, make Pesto, put it in any dish with tomatoes, place whole leaves on homemade pizza, put in homemade fresh tomato sauce for pasta, put stems in foil wrapped vegetables for the grill, put on top of pork chops for the grill, as well as veal, lamb and fish.

**CHIVES** – fresh snipped in any salads (egg salad and potato salad in particular), omelets or scrambled eggs, snip in sour cream for a potato topper, in bread, on fish, mix with cream cheese, sauces, tie around bundles of steamed asparagus, anywhere where a mild onion flavor is desired.

**CILANTRO** – One of the main ingredients in Salsa and guacamole, use in any Mexican, Indian or Asian dish, snip in omelets, salads (green or pasta), soup, on grilled peppers, in marinated mushrooms, tomatoes, rice pilaf and stews.

**DILL** – Use in green salads, egg salad, on fish (especially salmon), in marinated cucumbers, on grilled pork chops, in cream cheese and spreads, soups, sauces and Scandinavian recipes.

**LEMON BALM** – Use as a tea or a flavoring in your tea, in any beverages, in green salads, fruit salads, chicken salad, marinated vegetables, and on grilled chicken or fish.

**MARJORAM** – Good snipped in any salad, good on any meat or fish (pork especially), vegetables, mushrooms, tomatoes and rice, in stews, soups, marinades, dressings and spreads.

**MINT** – Use in jellies, sauces, teas, chopped in brownies, snipped in fruit and green salads, lamb, peas, carrots, cookies, cream cheese, cottage cheese and butter for fruit breads.

**OREGANO** – Good in any Italian dish, snip in breads, omelets, quiches, on tomatoes, beef, pork and shellfish, marinated vegetables, roasted bell peppers, and in pasta salad.

**ROSEMARY** – Use in any roasted poultry or meat, any game, potatoes, tomatoes, any Italian dish, mushrooms, soups and use stems as skewers for grilled meat.

**SAGE** – Use in any poultry dish, poultry stuffing, grilled potatoes, snipped in salads, omelets, soups, bread, sausage, tomatoes and beans.

**TARRAGON** – A main ingredient in Fines Herbes, use in sauces (tartar, béarnaise), French dressing, any chicken dish, shellfish, meat, use in coleslaw, tomatoes, mushrooms and rice.

**THYME** – A main ingredient in Bouquet Garni, use in any meat or poultry, soups, stews, snip in mayonnaise, mustard, broccoli, eggs and rice.

# AN AUTUMN PRAYER

We thank Thee, Lord, this October day  
For these Thy gifts  
Thanks for the way the falling leaves renew the earth  
Symbol and promise of Man's rebirth –  
Thanks for fruits of field and plow  
We planted them and harvest now.  
Thanks for the sun and summer shade  
Beauty of sky and silent glade –  
For Autumn's glory where summer is past  
For stars clear gleaming in Thy heaven vast –  
Oh, make us worthy to do our part  
To cherish Thy wondrous world, Oh God.  
Amen.

*Composed by May Walton*

