

## Common Thyme

### *Thymus vulgaris*



<b>Height:</b>	30cm (12in)
<b>Suitable for:</b>	Sunny well drained spot. Containers, rockeries and paths.
<b>Summary:</b>	This well known herb grows as a small upright shrub, which is attractively evergreen and bushy. A must for every herb garden and to use in the kitchen.

#### More information:

Common thyme is an attractive bushy herb with tiny aromatic leaves and spikes of lilac flowers in mid-summer, much loved by bees and butterflies alike.

Like all thymes it should be trimmed hard after flowering to retain compact growth and to encourage new shoots for the rest of the year. This is particularly important with common thyme as it has a tendency to become woody and straggly with age.

Common thyme is essential, used in french cuisine and is one of the ingredients of a traditional bouquet garni along with parsley, bay leaves and sometimes rosemary. Common thyme is mostly used in marinades, stews and stuffings, but can also in soups, salads and vegetable dishes, but sparingly so that the strong flavour does not overpower. It is particularly good with aubergines, mushrooms, courgettes and mediterranean bean dishes.

## Marinated summer olives

These olives are tasty and moreish to serve with drinks, or they can be used as part of a mixed starter.

- 500g stoned olives (black or green, or a mixture of the two)
- 125ml good olive oil (or home-made basil oil – see recipe under [sweet basil](#))
- 125ml dry white wine
- 4 tsp chopped common [thyme](#)
- 2 cloves chopped garlic
- 6 crushed black peppercorns
- a sprig of [rosemary](#).

Mix together all the ingredients for the marinade and pour over the olives in a jar or plastic bowl with a lid. Refrigerate for at least 5 days before serving, giving them a shake or a stir each day.

Dried thyme leaves are considerably more aromatic than fresh ones. The sprigs for drying should be cut just before flowering, when they have maximum flavour. Hang the bunches in a dark, dry place for 2 weeks, then crumble the leaves off of the stems before storage.

Thyme aids the digestion, helps coughing and is strongly antiseptic, as well as a multitude of external other uses, including aromatherapy. Take advice before using during pregnancy.