

SGU Ranch/NRE Project

Weekly Herb Highlight

This is article 3 of a series of educational and interesting facts about native and medicinal herbs. SGU Ranch has a large research plot consisting of different herbs and spices. If you are interested in touring the gardens, volunteering, or attending courses including herbs as a business, please call SGU Ranch @ 856-5236.

SAGE (*Peji hota*)*

Botanical: *Salvia officinalis* (LINN.)

Native plant of Rosebud Indian reservation,

Here are common varieties on the reservation - information provided by Mary Scott, Tribal Liaison, Natural Resources Conservation Service: Cudweed Sagewort (gray sage used in ceremonies) Fringed/Prairie Sagewort, Green Sagewort, Western Sagewort, Wormwood Sage (big clumpy bunch sage-woody)

Description: It is a hardy perennial plant, does not last above three or four years without degenerating, so that the plantation should be renewed at least every four years. It is propagated occasionally by seed, but more frequently by cuttings. New plantations are readily made by pulling off the young shoots from three-year-old plants in spring, generally in the latter end of April, as soon as they attain a sufficiency of hardness to enable them to maintain themselves on the moisture of the ground and atmosphere, while the lower extremities are preparing roots. See the young plants do not suffer from want of water during their first summer, and hoe the rows regularly to induce a bushy growth, nipping off the growing tips if shooting up too tall. Treat the ground with soot and mulch in winter with old manure. Cuttings may also be taken in the autumn, as soon as the plants have ceased flowering.

Sage is also often propagated by layers, in the spring and autumn, the branches of old plants being pegged down on the ground and covered with 1/2 inch of earth. The plant, being like other of the woody-stemmed garden herbs, a 'stem rooter,' each of the stems thus covered will produce quantities of rootlets by just lying in contact with the ground, and can after a time be cut away from the old plant and transplanted to other quarters as a separate plant.

Chemical Constituents: The chief constituent of Sage and its active principle is a yellow or greenish-yellow volatile oil (sp. gr. 0.910 to 0.930) with a penetrating odor. Tannin



Sage

and resin are also present in the leaves, 0.5 to 1.0 per cent of the oil is yielded from the leaves and twigs when fresh, and about three times this quantity when dry.

Medicinal Action and Uses: Stimulant, as stringent, tonic and carminative. Among many uses of the herb, it is:

“Good for diseases of the liver and to make blood. A decoction of the leaves and branches of Sage made and drank, provokes urine and causes the hair to become black. It stayed the bleeding of wounds and cleaned ulcers and sores. It is profitable for all pains in the head coming of cold rheumatic humors, as also for all pains in the joints, whether inwardly or outwardly. The juice of Sage in warm water cured hoarseness and cough. Sage is of excellent use to help the memory, warming and quickening the senses. The fresh leaves, rubbed on the teeth, will cleanse them and strengthen the gums. Sage is a common ingredient in tooth-powders.”

Sage Tea: The infusion when made for *internal* use is termed Sage Tea, and can be made simply by pouring 1 pint of boiling water on to 1 OZ. of the dried herb, the dose being from a wineglassful to half a teacupful,

Sage Tea or infusion of Sage is a valuable agent in the delirium of fevers and in the nervous excitement frequently accompanying brain and nervous diseases and has considerable reputation as a remedy, given in small and often-repeated doses. It is highly serviceable as a stimulant tonic in debility of the stomach and nervous system and weakness of digestion generally.

Lakota Elders use sage for Colds and Coughs, Diabetes, healthy Hairs, Skin Irritation & Wounds healing, to help mothers stop nursing, Colic problems. Many medicinal uses included smudging for daily purification and prayer.

(Dr. Subodh K. Singh, Lisa Colombe, Project NRE, SGU Ranch)