

מְרוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – Jerusalem Sage – Salvia Hierosolymitana Boiss

Year-round, Resilient, Reliable Friend

My garden teaches me that I'm not in control. From all the flowers, herbs and bushes I purchase, and all the seeds I plant, only some decide to make my garden their home. One such plant is 'Jerusalem Sage.' I wish that this referred to King David or to King Solomon, yet I have to accept that Jerusalem sage is an edible perennial herb with long, hairy stems covered with fuzzy, velvet-like, gray-green leaves. In mid-to-late-summer, the stalks yield beautiful, pale burgundy flowers that give off a strong pungent aroma. What now dots every nook and cranny of both my front and backyard, was, more than a decade ago, a gift from America – a small package of Organic Heirloom seeds. Whereas, the Echinacea seeds, from the same gift package, only made it for one season, the Jerusalem sage decided that it had returned from exile to its rightful home. As Dave Ehrlinger, the chief horticulturalist, notes, "True sage has been grown in Israel for thousands of years." Not as glamorous as Echinacea flowers or as useful as kale – another plant I have not succeeded in making feel welcome – Jerusalem sage is a reliable friend, who is always there for me. It grows year round, even when no other green leaves are to be found anywhere. Although its leaves have a strong, herbaceous flavor, the entire plant is edible and can be used in smoothies, soups, stir-fries, meat dishes or stews. The leaves can be eaten cooked and also filled with rice or used as a garnish on meat, vegetable or egg dishes. Its strong flavor and fuzziness require that you use it sparingly, especially when raw like in a green smoothie.



Menorah-Shaped Sage for Delighting in Hashem's Healing Light

Jerusalem sage, with its textured, large green leaves, burgundy-red and white flowers, branches out into the shape of a Menorah, similar to the instructions Hashem gave Moshe, regarding the construction of the Temple candelabra:

סַפֵּר שְׁמוֹת פְּרָק כֹּה פֹסוּק לֵב וְשֵׁשֶׁה קָנִים יֵצְאוּ מִצְדֵּיהָ שְׁלֹשָׁה קָנֵי מְנֹרָה מִצְדֵּה הָאֶחָד וְשְׁלֹשָׁה קָנֵי מְנֹרָה מִצְדֵּה הַשֵּׁנִי: לֵג שְׁלֹשָׁה גְּבָעִים מְשֻׁקְדִים בְּקִנָּה הָאֶחָד כְּפֹתֵר וְפָרַח כֵּן לִשְׁשֶׁת הַקָּנִים הַיֵּצְאוּ מִן הַמְּנֹרָה:

"Six branches coming out of its sides: three menorah branches from its one side and three menorah branches from its second side. Three decorated goblets on one branch, a knob and a flower, and three decorated goblets on one branch, a knob and a flower; so for the six branches that come out of the menorah" (*Shemot* 25:32-33).

Various Biblical botanists claim that a plant like this served as a model for the Menorah of the Beit Hamikdash. From the Torah perspective, it goes the other way.. Hashem instructed Moshe regarding the Menorah according to the Divine vision. That same Divine vision created several sage varieties with a similar Menorah-like shape. I recently gave Chanukah gifts of various garden seeds and wrote on the adjoining card, "Seeds are Light!" Just as the Menorah in the Temple reflects the Divine light and diffuses it into the world and into our souls, these plants transform the Divine radiance into nutrients, remedies and ornaments for us to delight in Hashem's healing light.

Respiratory Healer with Astringent and Wound Healing Properties

Jerusalem Sage includes three species:

Phlomis Fruticosa, Pulmonaria Officinalis and Salvia Hierosolymitana

<http://b-and-t-world-seeds.com/comm.asp?searchFor=Jerusalem+Sage>

Pulmonaria is so named because it looks like lung tissue and is also known as lungwort. It is an expectorant and anti-inflammatory and thus alleviates coughs, bronchitis and its related symptoms such as coughing and sore throat. Lungwort, distinguished by its yellow flowers, is known to contain small amounts of tannins, which may exert a drying effect on respiratory tissue and upper respiratory catarrh. It also has a high percentage of mucilage, which helps to soothe irritated tissue. Tannins have a slight astringent effect when applied to the skin. Astringents shrink and tighten the top layers of skin, thereby reducing secretions, relieving irritation, and improving tissue firmness. Due to this effect, it treats diarrhea, hemorrhoids and minor skin injuries such as scrapes and sunburn. Externally, this plant may be used to heal cuts and wounds due to its vulnerary property. The leaves of Salvia Hierosolymitana have valuable topical anti-inflammatory properties. You can soak a soft cloth in strong Jerusalem Sage tea and apply it to an aching or injured area of the skin.

Red-Rooted Sage in Chinese Medicine

In Chinese Medicine, a related variation of Jerusalem sage, 'Salvia Miltiorrhiza,' known as 'Tan Shen,' 'Chinese Sage' or 'Red-Rooted Sage,' is a most important herb. It is traditionally used to stabilize the heart and calm the nerves, and to lighten or remove stagnant blood. Clinical experience shows that the roots reduce blood pressure, improve circulation by dilating the blood vessels, and reduce blood cholesterol. It is also useful for palpitations, irritability and insomnia. It treats hepatitis, infections, and many skin diseases such as shingles, dermatitis and psoriasis.

Hands On:

Wild, edible Salvia Hierosolymitana has dark-pink or reddish flowers and is not the same as the inedible Phlomis Fruticosa. The most delicious way to eat Salvia Hierosolymitana is stuffed with rice and vegetables, enriched with a tomato sauce. Preparing Stuffed Jerusalem Sage is a creative way to spend productive time with a dear one.

Stuffed Jerusalem Sage

500 grams – 1 lb. fresh Jerusalem Sage leaves

1 ½ cups rice

½ cup pine nuts – may substitute sunflower seeds

¼ cup olive oil

½ green bell pepper, finely chopped

½ cup onions, finely chopped

1 cup seeded, chopped tomatoes

½ cup chopped parsley

1 ½ teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

Another ¼ cup olive oil

½ cup lemon juice

½ cup water and more if needed

1 large tomato, thickly sliced

Cloves from 1 head of garlic, separated and peeled

Herbal Remedies from the Judean Hills - Months of Kislev/Tevet

1. Rinse the rice and set it to drain.
2. Blanch the leaves by placing each in boiling water for 30 seconds, then putting into a bowl with cold water.
3. Mix the rice and pine nuts in a medium bowl.
4. Heat ¼ cup olive oil in a frying pan and cook the bell pepper, onions, parsley and chopped tomatoes over medium heat for 5 minutes, stirring a few times. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. When the vegetables are soft, reserve 3 tablespoons and set aside. Pour the rest into the rice/pine nuts mixture. Mix well.
6. Spoon one tablespoon of filling onto the center of each leaf and make a square bundle, securing it with a toothpick. Alternately, place the filling on the broad end of the leaf and roll it into a fat cigar. Secure with a toothpick.
7. Pour ¼ cup olive oil into a large pot. Cover the bottom of the pot with sliced tomato and peeled garlic cloves. Place the stuffed leaves on top, making layers if needed.
8. Sprinkle salt and lemon juice over all. Add water to barely cover the leaves. Scatter the reserved cooked vegetables over the top.
9. Bring to a simmer then cook covered over low heat for ½ hour or until the sauce thickens. Check to ensure that the bottom layer isn't drying out or scorching. If so, add more water.
10. Serve hot.