Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Candy Mullen
“Historical Herbs, part two”

“Are you going to Scarborough Faire?
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.
Remember me to one who lives there
For once she was a true love of mine.”

This is the second part of the article discussing these historical herbs. Parsley and Thyme take their place today.

**Parsley:** Ancient Greek and Roman times used parsley as a flavoring and garnish. Winners at ancient games were crowned with it. As a medicine from the times of Hippocrates it was used for rheumatism, kidney pains, and general health. It was also used in Hebrew Passover rites as a symbol of spring and rebirth. It is loaded with vitamins A and C, minerals (esp. iron) and chlorophyll. It is prescribed today for bad digestion and to take away the bitterness of various dishes. It is often used as a garnish on plates and is perfectly edible! The various types, Curly, flat-leafed, Italian, Genovese, are easy to grow in pots and in the ground. It is an annual so don’t expect it to winter over in Central Texas. Parsley needs rich, moist, well drained soil, and full sun, afternoon shade. It is a great companion to tomatoes and roses in your garden.

**Thyme:** This versatile herb symbolizes courage. The earliest recorded use was 3000BC in Sumeria. It was used as an antiseptic, and Egyptians used it in mummification. The Greeks used it for massage and bath oils, incense, and as a medicine. The phrase “to smell of Thyme” was used as high praise. It was also considered the source of the best honey and the Romans would bathe in water scented with thyme before going into battle. Knights would wear it on their shields. It is a woody perennial and needs well draining soil. There is French thyme and English thyme and assorted varieties of either upright or prostrate. The varieties and colors are many with tiny star-like flowers in multiple shades from crimson to white. The smaller the leaf, the more flavor holds true for thyme. It is a great herb for Central Texas and will grow prolifically in your garden. The best companions are lavender and sage. It attracts bees (thus the best honey), repels cabbageworms, and is a moth repellent in linens! It is known as a generally all around great herb as well as a true culinary delight.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com