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ALOE VERA =====

CULTIVATION: ===== Aloe vera is a plant with clusters of very fleshy blades, usually prickly at the margin and tip, bearing erect spikes of yellow, orange or red flowers. They appear most of the year.

Aloe vera needs full sun or light shade and a frost-free location. The soil should be gritty and well drained. Sow seeds in spring at 70 deg. F. Aloe produces offshoots, which may be removed and replanted when they are a few inches tall. Remove offshoots in summer, then dry for 2 days before planting in 2 parts of compost and 1 part sharp sand. Maintain 41 deg. F. minimum. Aloe is an excellent indoor plant.

Cut leaves from plant as needed. No method of preserving is known at present, although a product called aloe vera gel is available. This contains 99.9% aloe vera.

CULINARY USES: ===== NO CULINARY USES

MEDICAL USES: ===== The aloe vera plant contains salicylates, the same painkilling and anti-inflammatory compound found in aspirin. It also contains magnesium lactate, a substance capable of causing skin irritation and itching.

The gel from the center of the leaves may provide temporary pain relief and aids in healing minor burns, scrapes, cuts, skin ulcers, cold sores, pressure sores, and sunburn. Aloe breaks down dead tissue in a wound even as it helps regenerate new tissue, spreading the healing of burns. Aloe also helps repair skin damaged by cold. It can greatly reduce the damage caused by frostbites.

Aloe works best when exposed to open air, so leave the wound uncovered if possible. It should not be used on burns that are more than skin-deep, or

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skin ulcer larger than a dime. Aloe vera attracted some attention from government for its ability to heal radiation burns.

A study found a special cream of aloe, vitamin C, and other ingredients reduces arthritis inflammation. Fresh aloe gel is much more potent than gel that has been stored and added to commercial preparation.

WARNING: ===== Do not take internally, the sap is a strong laxative some people are hypersensitive to aloe vera and will develop a rash.

COSMETIC USES: ===== Fresh aloe vera gel is a useful emollient hair conditioner. Break open the leaf, rub the gel through your hair, wait 15 minutes, then shampoo thoroughly.

Use the leaf sap to make a soothing and healing moisturizing cream especially for dry skin. Crush the leaves or slice them and apply as a poultice for chapped skin, dermatitis, and eczema.