

Bay_1994.txt

BAY =====

CULTIVATION: ===== Bay is a evergreen tree with gray shiny bark. Usually grown as a bush up to 6 feet tall. Leaves are leathery, dark green, and shiny above. Bay has small yellowish flowers in groups of 3-4.

It needs full sun and protection from wind. The soil should be rich, moist and well drained. Bay is very difficult to propagate. Take 4 inch stem cuttings. Cuttings are difficult to root, when successful, it will take up to 6 months. The best way is to buy saplings from a nursery. Growing from seeds is not recommended.

Transplant to 4 feet apart in frost free area for the first two years. Bay can be container grown, but bring indoors if the temperature drops below 5 Deg. F.

Pick leaves anytime for immediate use or drying.

CULINARY USES: ===== Bay is one herb that is better dried for cooking than fresh. On the other hand dried leaves gradually diminish in flavor when stored.

Add a leave or two to marinades, stock, pates, stuffings and curries. When poaching fish add a bay leave to the water. A leave in the storing jar of rice will improve the flavor of the it.

Bay also flavors stews. Add at start of cooking and remove before serving. The leaves are quite sharp, and swallowing a piece of leave could prove harmful.

Bay leaves are one herb that should be added early in cooking, because it requires a lot of simmering before the flavor permeates the food. One leave per dish is usually sufficient.

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MEDICAL USES: ===== The oil in bay leaves contains healing properties which may bring relieve to aching limbs and muscles, particularly if this is caused by excessive exercise or exertion.

For a first aid treatment, apply some freshly crushed leaves to minor cuts and scraps. For a relaxing aromatic infusion with a pleasant sweet aroma, use 1-2 teaspoons of crushed leaves per cup of boiling water. Strain the liquid before drinking. Drink up to 3 cups a day. You can also add 1-2 drops of bay oil to tea, brandy, or honey.

Use the dried leaves quickly to capture the optimum flavor. Old dried leaves lack pungency. You can make your own bay oil by adding 2 ounces of crushed bay leaves, 1/2 pint pure olive oil, and 1 tablespoon of wine vinegar into a screw-to jar. Leave in warm place, ideally on a windowsill, for 2 weeks. Shake the mixture each day and after 2 weeks when the bay will have released its healing properties into the oil, strain and add some fresh bay leaves. Leave for a further 4 weeks, after which time the oil will be ready for use.

WARNING: ===== All laurels except sweet bay are poisonous. Do not give medicinal preparation of bay to children under age of 2. It may also stimulate menstruation and abortion. Pregnant woman should stay away from medicinal doses. OTHER USES: ===== A chemical called Cineole in bay repels cockroaches. Spread some crushed bay leaves around your kitchen cupboards. Add crushed leaves to potpourris.