

# APRIL/MAY 2021 ISSUE NO. 2 EDGEHILLHERBFARM.BLOG NEWSLETTER

## SWEET BAY EVERY DAY -



Caption: Karen England has been known to wear a bay wreath on her head as often as possible.

*By Karen England, the Edgehill Herb Farmer.*

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When I am asked what my favorite herb is, I always answer "Cleveland Sage", *Salvia clevelandii*, and I'm not lying. It truly is my favorite herb, and we will discuss it soon in an issue of this newsletter, I promise, but, if the standard of what constitutes my favorite herb is based on the herb that

I use the most, every day in fact, then Bay, *Laurus nobilis*, would be the winner and my hands down favorite herb.



[This Photo](#) of *Salvia clevelandii* blossoms by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Caption: *Salvia clevelandii*, Karen's other favorite herb.

Do you have a favorite herb? I'm betting you do. Even if you haven't thought about it much, you probably gravitate to foods made with a certain herb or to gardens where it grows, because it is your favorite. And, like me, it might be the predominant herb in your favorite meal or dish, which is, by the way, why Cleveland sage is my favorite herb. I call it "the herb that saved Thanksgiving", and Thanksgiving is my absolute favorite day of the year and must be saved at

all costs. Your favorite herb might remind you of someone you love or be the first herb you ever grew successfully or the herb that makes you feel better or sleep better. If you don't have a favorite herb, it's okay, you have a lifetime to decide. No rush.

If you answered that Bay, *Laurus nobilis*, was your favorite you are in fine company.



Caption: Sweet Bay, *Laurus nobilis*, Karen's favorite everyday herb.

Chef Jamie Shannon, said in the 1999 book, *My Favorite Herb*, by Laurel Keser, "Bay leaf is incredible." In the book, Chef Shannon suggests the following mind-blowing way to enjoy bay . . .

. . . "One excellent way to use bay, he says, is to extract the oil from fresh bay leaves with a juicer. Add some olive oil, and use the mixture for salad dressings and for cooking fish. If you don't have a juicer, he says, you can infuse the oil instead. Heat about 1 cup of olive oil to 105°F (no higher) with about 8 fresh bay leaves, 10 or 12 if dried. Process the oil and bay leaves in a food processor, and strain. If you have an oven with a pilot light you can also let the bay and oil steep for several hours in the oven. Bottle the bay-flavored oil and refrigerate. He cautions that infused oils must always be refrigerated to prevent the oil from spoiling. It is best to make just the amount of infused oil you can use within two to three weeks."

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In the 1986 book *Fancy Pantry* by Helen Witty, although she does not state that bay is her favorite herb, she says this about "Powdered Bay Leaves -

Spice packers used to offer jars of ground bay leaves, but no more, alas. So I grind my own, a simple matter for anyone who possesses a little electric spice mill, or even a coffee mill that has a horizontal, or "windmill," grinding apparatus. *Tips:* Remove any bits of stem (they are hard to grind) and crumble the dried leaves coarsely before starting to grind them. Grind enough bay leaves for a tiny jarful at a time, as whole leaves retain their flavor longer than the powder does. Pack the powder firmly into its jar and store it away from heat and light." Use in recipes calling for ground bay or as you would with other ground spices.



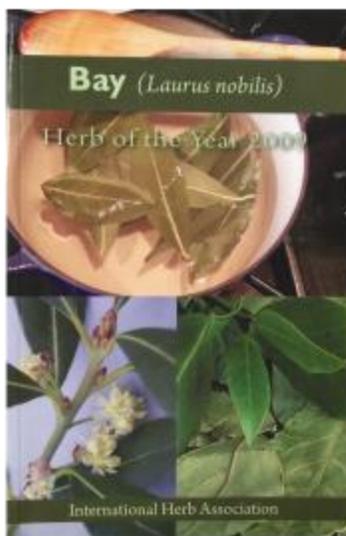
Caption: Fresh or dried, sweet or savory, bay leaves are great for use every day.

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Bay was the 2009 Herb of the Year™ and Edgehill Herb Farm currently has copies of the International Herb

Association's Bay Book for sale in the EHF shop. (Because I was traveling in Australia during the submission deadline for the Bay HOY book in 2008, I was unaware that my contribution was never received by the IHA and sadly I do not have a chapter in this book. It's still a great book and worth getting a copy. Hint, hint . . .

<https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/>



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## ***USE BOTANICAL NAMES WHEN SEARCHING THE WEB -***

When you are searching the web for information on the health benefits of bay, *Laurus nobilis*, sometimes called Sweet Bay, be aware that online information can be quite a jumble because there are many plants that are commonly referred to as bay but the health benefits for each plant

differs. Do not think that the benefits are all the same. Use the botanical name when searching for wellness information of any herb, not just bay, and find a trusted source with info that is specific to each plant. Some other bay leaf trees are:

- California Bay leaf, or California Laurel, *Umbellularia californica*
  - Indian Bay leaf, *Cinnamomum tamala*
  - Mexican Bay leaf, *Litsea glaucescens*
  - West Indian Bay leaf, or Bay Rum Tree, *Pimenta racemosa*
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### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

Read the whole fascinating article here <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/archaeology-london-spitalfields-woman-mola-b1774473.html> .

"After 21 years of research, archaeologists have succeeded in piecing together the extraordinary story of an ultra-high-status Roman aristocrat who was buried in London, more than 16 centuries ago.

Her burial, in Spitalfields on the northern edge of the city, is arguably the most high status late Roman grave ever found in Britain.

The investigation also revealed that, in her grave, her head rested on a pillow filled with bay leaves, almost certainly imported from the Mediterranean area."

- Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), the organization which investigated the Spitalfields discovery.

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Caption: A jug of homemade "Laurino", a bay leaf liqueur that hails from Italy, is a staple in Karen's kitchen.

I am growing four now huge *Laurus nobilis* bay trees and my neighbor has a forest of sorts with 25 bay trees growing along our property line so I will never run out of bay leaves and it's just one of the reasons that I use it every day. I use bay leaves, both fresh and dried, and in both sweet and savory dishes. It's in all my stocks, sauces, soups and stews, it is in my morning steel-cut Irish oats, it's in my rice and barley dishes, including rice pudding for dessert. I drink a tea brewed with lemon and bay leaves for flavor and health benefits. I decorate my home, inside and out, with bay wreaths and swags and I've even been known to wear a bay wreath on my head from time to time. I smudge dried bay leaves just like smudging white sage or cedar to scent and clear the air in my home. I put bay leaves in my warm bath water to ease muscle aches and pains and encourage sleep. I make a bay leaf liqueur for sipping and for making cocktails. I use the leaves in my warm milk at night just as culinary herbalist Susan Belsinger teaches in the 2009 Bay, Herb of the Year™ book (if you have the book the recipe is on page 91, [if you do not, get your copy here](#)).

Want to learn more? Karen has blogged about bay many times and here are some links:

- Cocktail of the weekend <https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/>
- Bay Everyday <https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/>

- Sweet Bay, 2009 Herb of the Year™, Part II  
<https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/2009/08/02/sweet-bay-%e2%80%98herb-of-the-year-part-ii/>
  - Sweet Bay, 2009 Herb of the Year™, Part I  
<https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/2009/07/30/sweet-bay-the-2009-herb-of-the-year/>
  - Bay Liqueur <https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/>
  - Kumquat Day  
<https://edgehillherbfarm.blog/2012/03/07/did-you-know-today-is-kumquat-day/>
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***NOT GARDENING IN A MEDITERRANEAN CLIMATE? You can still grow Bay . . .***

If you live in climates with rough winters and want to grow *Laurus nobilis* then grow your bay tree in a pot and bring it inside in the winter months as artist and author Tasha Tudor did during her lifetime. In a 1994 Herb Companion magazine article by Kathleen Halloran titled *Tasha Tudor: A Simple Life, A Sprawling Garden* found on [motherearthliving.com](http://motherearthliving.com)

<https://www.motherearthliving.com/gardening/tasha-tudor> it states,

"Tasha has many garden passions, among them old roses, a heirloom dianthus collection planted in a fairy

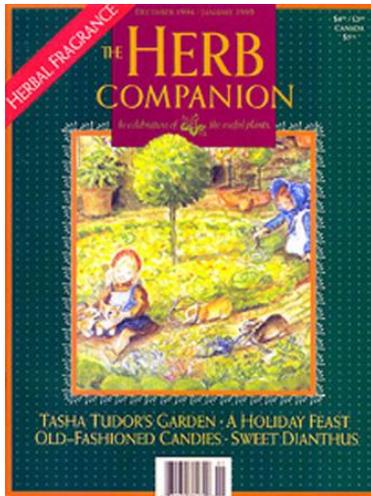
ring, peonies, huge stands of bleeding-hearts. Another is a mature, graceful herb garden with a massive, thirty-two-year-old potted bay tree at its center.

'I grow a lot of culinary herbs because I'm famous for my good cooking, of which I am inordinately proud—and it's wholly due to herbs,' she says.

Tasha admits to having no modesty concerning her garden either. She loves the thymes and basils, and she grows marjoram, chives, the savories, and tarragon. She bundles and dries sage to sprinkle on her goat cheese. Chamomile seeds itself everywhere, and for tea and tonics she also gathers nettles and red clover that grow wild in the meadows.

Tasha enjoys shaping various herb plants into standards. The old bay that she brings into the house each winter (it wouldn't survive outside in her climate, which straddles zones 4 and 5) . . . "

**“Where there’s a will, there’s a bay!” – Karen England**



Caption: Tasha Tudor painted her potted bay tree and her herb garden often and one such painting was the cover of the January 1994 issue of Herb Companion magazine.

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*QUESTION OF THE MONTH:* “What is your favorite herb and why?”

- Tell us your favorite herb in an email to Karen, [k-england@cox.net](mailto:k-england@cox.net), and look for future newsletters to be about the herbs you like best!
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*UNTIL NEXT THYME: In The Next Issue –*

- All about Cleveland Sage
- There is an Edgehill Herb Farm Podcast coming soon!
- We are making soap again! Look for new products in the EHF store.