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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE SWEET HERBS *

Most of the commonly used "sweet herbs" belong to one or the other of two great plant families, the Labiatae and the Umbelliferae. A few others, of which the most important is Tarragon, belong to the Compositae.

I. Labiatae - Leaves sprinkled over with tiny glands containing a volatile oil, which gives the plant its characteristic flavor.

*Basil (Ocimum Basilicum and O. minimum)
Hyssop (Hyssopus officinalis)
Mints:
  Spearmint (Mentha spicata) and other varieties
  Balm (Melissa officinalis)
  Catmint (Nepeta Cataria)
  Horehound (Marrubium vulgare)
Marjoram (Origanum Onites, O. Marjorana and O. vulgare)
Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis)
Sage (Salvia officinalis) and Clary Sage (Salvia sclarea)
Savory, Summer and Winter (Satureia hortensis and Satureia montana)
Thyme (Thymus vulgaris)

Characteristics: Stems square; leaves opposite.
Flowers 2-lipped, borne in axils of leaves, usually several together in rings or whorls which may constitute loose or compact spikes.
Fertilization mainly by bees.
Seeds, 4 small fruits or nutlets.

II. Umbelliferae - Seeds have oil-ducts between the longitudinal ribs.
The aromatic oil is found to some extent in other parts of the plant, as in dill, chervil, parsley.

Chervil (Anthriscus Cerefolium) Angelica (Archangelica officinalis)
Parsley (Carum Petroselinum) Caraway (Carum Carvi)
Cumin (Cuminum Cymimum) Coriander (Coriandrum sativum)
Lovage (Levisticum officinale) Dill (Anethum graveolens)
Anise (Pimpinella Anisum) Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare and var. dulce)

Characteristics: Stems cylindrical, usually hollow.
Leaves generally compound, base of stalk makes sheath which clasps the stem.
Flowers small, usually white or pinkish, in compound umbels.

III. Compositae -

Tarragon (Artemisia Dracunculus)
Marigold (Calendula officinalis)
Southernwood (Artemisia Abrotanum)
Tansy (Tanacetum vulgare).

To the representatives of these three great families may be added Rue, Borage, Burnet, and Sweet Bay, each belonging to a different plant family.

* Notes from Culinary Herbs and Condiments by Mrs. M. Grieve, published by Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York City. 525-37