

# Thyme

## A Study of 8 Varieties in a Hot, Dry Summer

Pioneer Unit -- Horticulture Study Group



# Horticulture Study Group - 2022

Co-Leaders: Madeline Johnson and Phoebe Lake

## Members

- Barbara Solis
- Becky Nichols
- Betty Pior
- Bonnie Lout
- Cammie Beierle
- Diana Sellers
- Ginger Heath
- Joanna Hagler
- Kathe Forrest
- Linda Rowlett
- Patty Mills
- Royceanna Kendall
- Susan Bame
- Susan Yancey

## Auditors

- Irene Spurrier
- Jana Reinhart
- Julie Johnson
- Mary Reeves
- Sally Reynolds

# Topics Covered

- Folklore / History
- Botany / Chemistry
- Cultivation
- Propagation
- Pests and Diseases
- Harvesting and Storing
- Culinary Uses
- Non-Culinary Uses
- Medicinal Uses
- The Study Results



Lemon Thyme (April)



French Thyme (April)

# Folklore / History

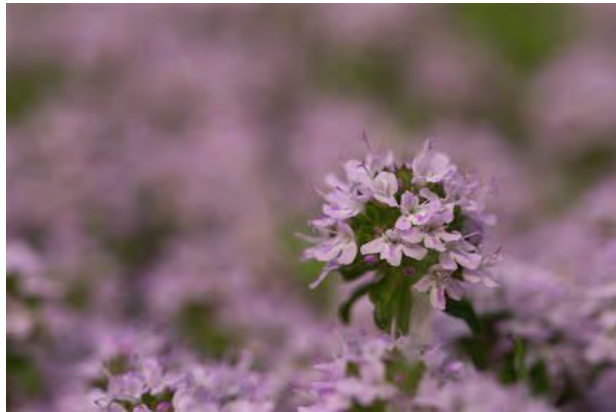
- Greek Mythology
  - Thyme was born from the tears of Helen of Troy
  - Symbol of courage and divinity



- Roman Folklore
  - Continues the symbol of courage
  - Exchanging thyme between soldiers showed respect

# Thyme and Death

- Ancient Egypt
  - Used for Purification
  - Used in Embalming



- Medieval Europe
  - Souls of the Departed Lived in Thyme Blossoms
  - Thyme added to Drink when communicating with the Departed

# Thyme and Fairies

- Fairies lived among wild thyme
- Rubbing the flowers of wild thyme on your eyelids helped you to see the fairies
- Patches of creeping thyme was evidence of the fairies' footsteps



# Botany

- *Thymus* (tī-mūs)
- *Lamiaceae* (family)
- 350+ species of *thymus*
- Native to Europe, Asia, Africa (temperate regions)
- Spain is largest producer for commercial uses (*T.vulgaris* and *T.zygis*)
- Types
  - Upright subshrubs (1-3 feet)
  - Creeping (up to 6 inches)
  - Flat Creepers (1-2 inches)
- Culinary thymes are usually an upright variety



# Chemistry

- Chemistry Varies by Species
  - Thymol provides its distinctive smell
  - Citral gives it a lemon odor
  - Thymol and carvacrol are the major oils providing therapeutic benefits
  - Thymol is an important ingredient in mouthwashes



English Porlock (May)



# Cultivation

- Warm weather (absolutely essential)
- 6-8 hours of full sun daily
- Well drained soil
- Space 12-24" apart after the ground temp reaches 70°
- Shallow roots so your soil amendments (compost, bone meal, etc) should be within 6" of the top
- Limit nitrogen as it decreases flavor
- Ground or container
- Water well until the plant is established
- Leave outside in winter but mulch



White Flowered Creeping  
(June 2022)

# Plants Benefitting from a Thyme Companion

- Potatoes (deters parasitic wasps)
- Tomatoes (deters hornworms and white flies)
- Strawberries (serves as a living mulch)
- Roses (repels aphids and blackfly)
- Berries (flowers attract pollinators)



# Propagation

- Stem Cuttings
  - 3-6" lengths of non-woody stem
  - Remove all but 2-3 sets of leaves
  - Set in potting soil mixed with sand or perlite
  - Cover loosely with plastic to increase humidity
  - Remove plastic occasionally
  - Roots in about 6 weeks
- Seeds
  - Wet potting soil
  - Sprinkle seeds on top and gently press into soil
  - Keep soil moist but not wet (fine misting works best)
  - Warm location out of direct or blowing heat
  - After the seedling emerge start increasing sunlight
- Layer by pegging a branch to the soil



Lemonade Cascade  
(March)

# Pests and Diseases

- Seedlings can succumb to damping off disease
  - Warm and wet soil can lead to fungi and root rot
  - Aphids and Spider Mites
- 
- Good drainage and air circulation prevents most problems



French Cut Back in  
October after Aphid  
Damage

# Harvesting

- Peak flavor is just before it blooms
- Morning is the best time of day
- Cut the stems just above a growth node



# Drying and Storing

- Hang a bundle upside down
- Spread out on tray
- When completely dry, place in a sealed container in a dark place

# Culinary Uses

- Sweet
  - Cakes, Cookies, Shortbreads, Scones, Breads
- Savory
  - Used in different cuisines (French to English to Caribbean to Middle East)
  - Chicken, Fish, Vegetables, Beef
- Frequently Used in Herb Blends
  - Fines Herbes
  - Bouquet Farni
  - Herbes de Provence
  - Cajun
- Teas
- Herbal Vinegars



# Culinary Tips



- Generally fresh is better than dry because it is more aromatic
- However, if cooking stews or soups dried thyme holds up better
- Leaves closer to the growing tip tend to have higher flavor
- Thyme flowers are edible – sprinkle over cooked vegetables
- Chop tender stems and leaves unless the stem is woody, then strip before chopping
- A sprig is usually 4-6” long
- Woody stems can be added during the last half hour but save the delicate branches (chopped) until the end

# Non-Culinary Uses

- Thyme Oil Properties
  - Antibacterial, aromatic, antiseptic, disinfectant
- Beauty Products
  - Exfoliate – include in sugar scrubs
  - Cleanse – bath salts, bath bombs, shampoo, hair rinse
  - Moisturize – body butter
- General Cleaning
  - Kitchen and bath cleanser
- Aromatherapy
- Crafts
- Flower Arrangements





**THYME**  

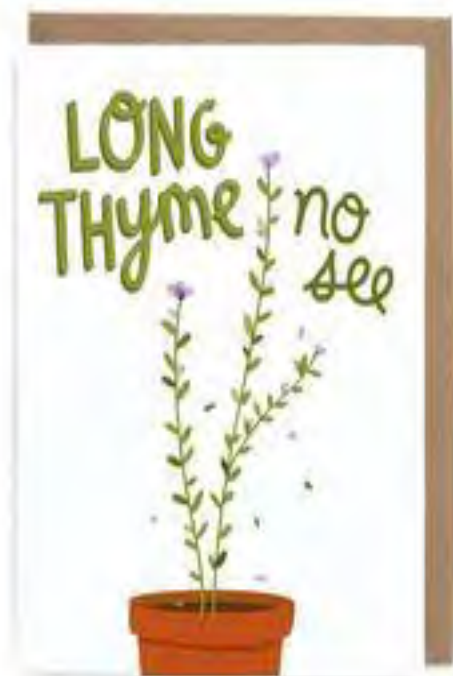
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*began*  

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**IN A**  
**GARDEN**





# Health Benefits

## NUTRIENTS IN THYME

Thyme smells great, and it's rich in vitamin C, vitamin A, and the B vitamins.

Thyme is also a good source of:

- Manganese – helps the body form connective tissue, bones, and blood clotting factors
- Magnesium – helps with bone strength, heart health, immune function, and muscle cramps
- Zinc – necessary for the activity of over 300 enzymes
- Potassium – necessary for the normal functioning of all cells
- Calcium – builds strong bones and teeth
- Iron – helps preserve many functions, including general energy and focus

# Homeopathic Uses

## 1. Drink Thyme Tea

- To enjoy the health benefits of thyme, you can easily prepare it as a tea. You can choose to make your tea using fresh leaves or ground thyme powder. You can also use dried thyme, but remember to strain the leaves from your drink to avoid unpleasant textures.
- For fresh leaves, add several sprigs of thyme to a cup of boiling water and let steep for 5 to 8 minutes. If any leaves fall off the sprigs and into your water, you can strain them before drinking.
- For powdered thyme, add about 1 teaspoon of the powder to a cup of boiling water and stir to combine. Ground thyme is similar in texture to matcha green tea powder, and you may need to stir several times to ensure thorough mixing.

## 2. Diffuse Thyme Oil

To diffuse with thyme oil, add a few drops to the water in your diffuser, and let it run in your room overnight.

The enriched stream circulates in the air in the room, and you'll benefit from breathing in the polyphenols in the treated water.

Some sources suggest the need for caution when children or pets are present.

## 3. Apply Thyme Ointment

Use the ointment for inflammation and other skin irritations.

# Reputed Health Benefits

- Enhance immune response
- Reduce blood pressure
- Soothe a cough
- Resolve respiratory problems
- Enhance mood
- Reduce inflammation
- Fight cancer
- Soothe skin irritation
- Slow macular degeneration
- Remove stains from teeth
- Treat dyspraxia [Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)]
- Repel pests
- Disinfect surfaces

# The Study Objective

- Compare the growth habits of 8 varieties
  - Rate of growth
  - Plant form (in terms of height and diameter)
  - Tendency to flower
  - Preference for ground vs. container
  - Overall performance in our region



# Measurements (monthly)

- Plant measurements
  - Tallest portion of plant
  - Widest portion of plant
  - Typical leaf size
- Soil and light measurements
  - pH
  - Moisture
  - Light
- Photos



# Varieties Studied

## Primarily Culinary

- ❖ English Porlock
- ❖ French
- ❖ German
- ❖ Lemon
- ❖ Silver Lemon

## Primarily Ornamental

- ❖ Lemonade Cascade
- ❖ Rose Scented
- ❖ White-Flowered Creeping



# The Study

Each Grower had 8 plants.



	GROUP A	GROUP B
English Porlock	C	G
French	G	C
German	G	C
Lemon	G	C
Silver Lemon	C	G
Lemonade Cascade	C	G
Rose Scented	C	G
White Flowering Creeping	G	C

G –ground planting

C – container planting

# It's not always pretty!



English Porlock (May)

Lemonade Cascade (Nov)



Rose Scented (July)

White Flowered Creeping (August)



# English Porlock



(June)

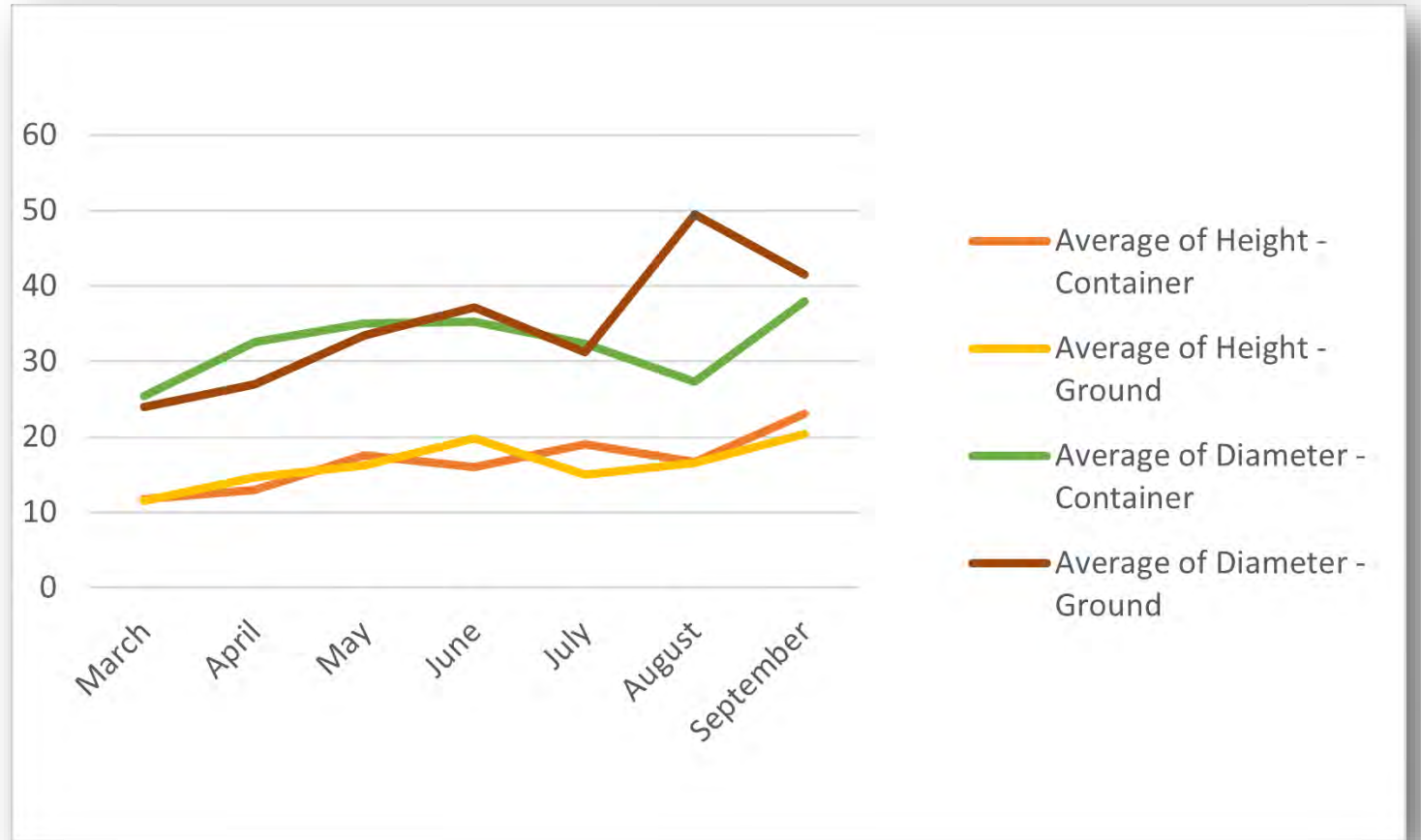


(August)

Photos by Royceanna Kendall

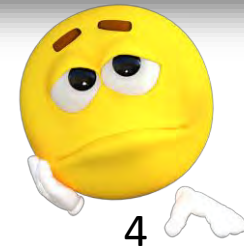


# English Porlock



**A+** excellent!

April: 8 out of 14  
 July: 3 out of 8  
 Sept: 4 out of 8



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# French



April

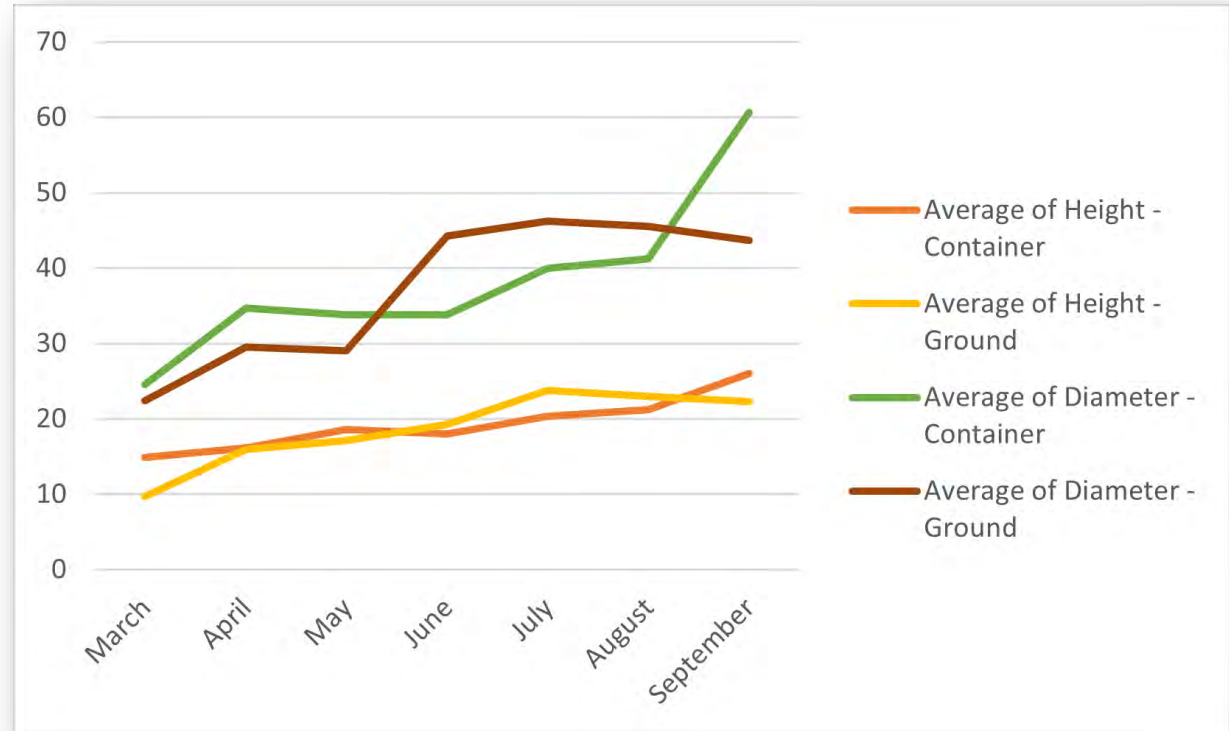


August

Photos by Phoebe Lake

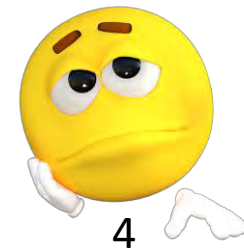


# French



**A+** excellent!

April: 10 out of 13  
 July: 4 out of 6  
 Sept: 4 out of 5



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# German

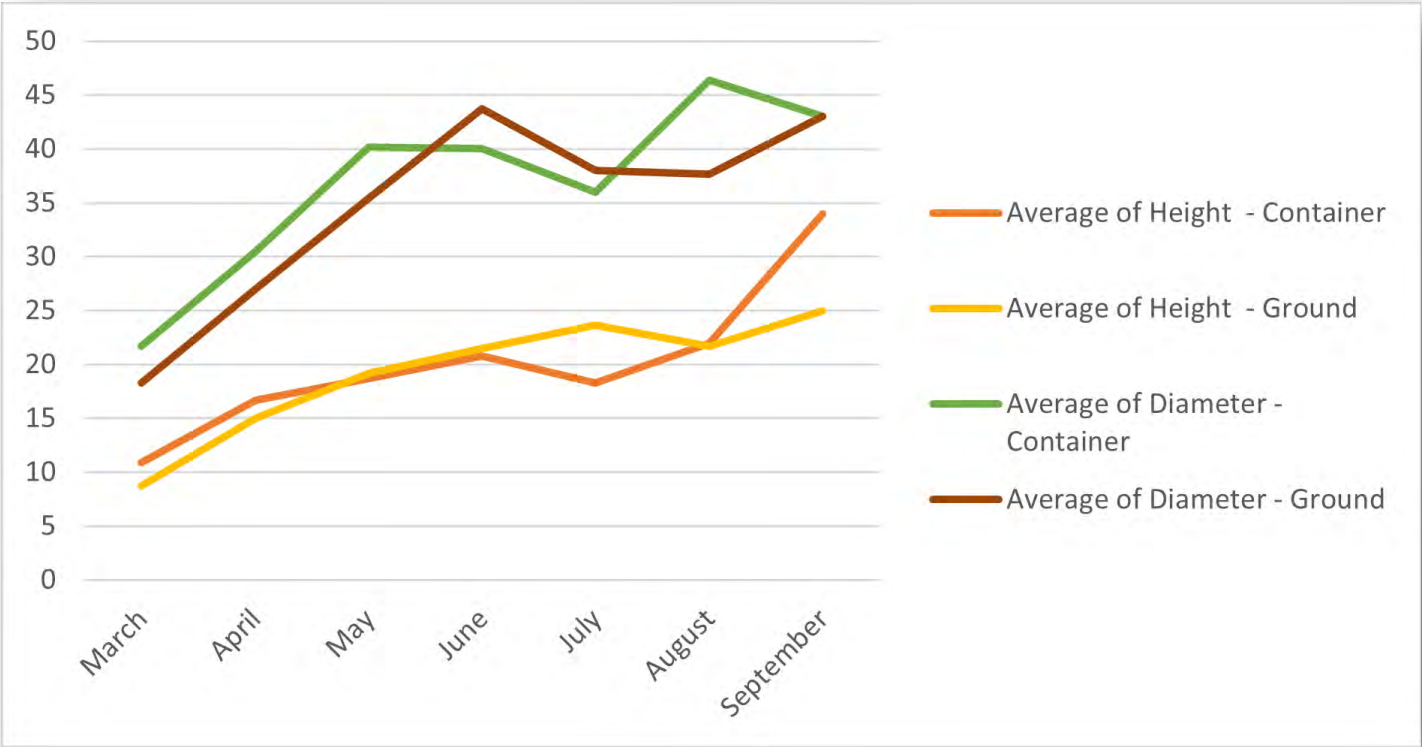


Photo by Cammie Bierle (April)



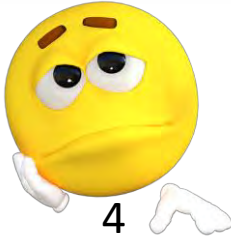
Photo by Becky Nichols (August)

# German



**A+** excellent!

April: 8 out of 12  
July: 3 out of 7  
Sept: 3 out of 7



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# Lemon



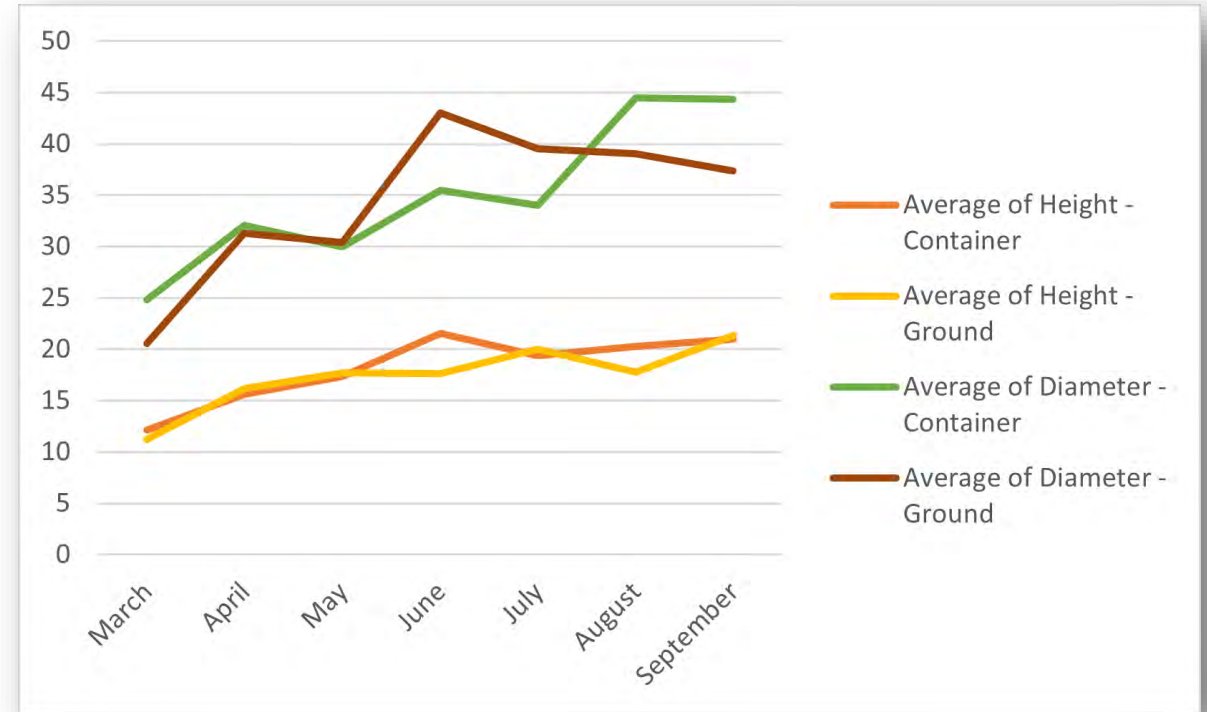
Photo by Susan Yancey (April)



Photo by Madeline Johnson (July)

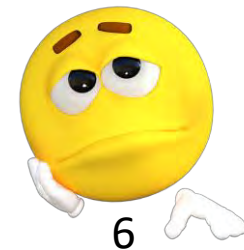


# Lemon



**A+** excellent!

April: 12 out of 14  
 July: 4 out of 9  
 Sept: 3 out of 6



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# Silver Lemon



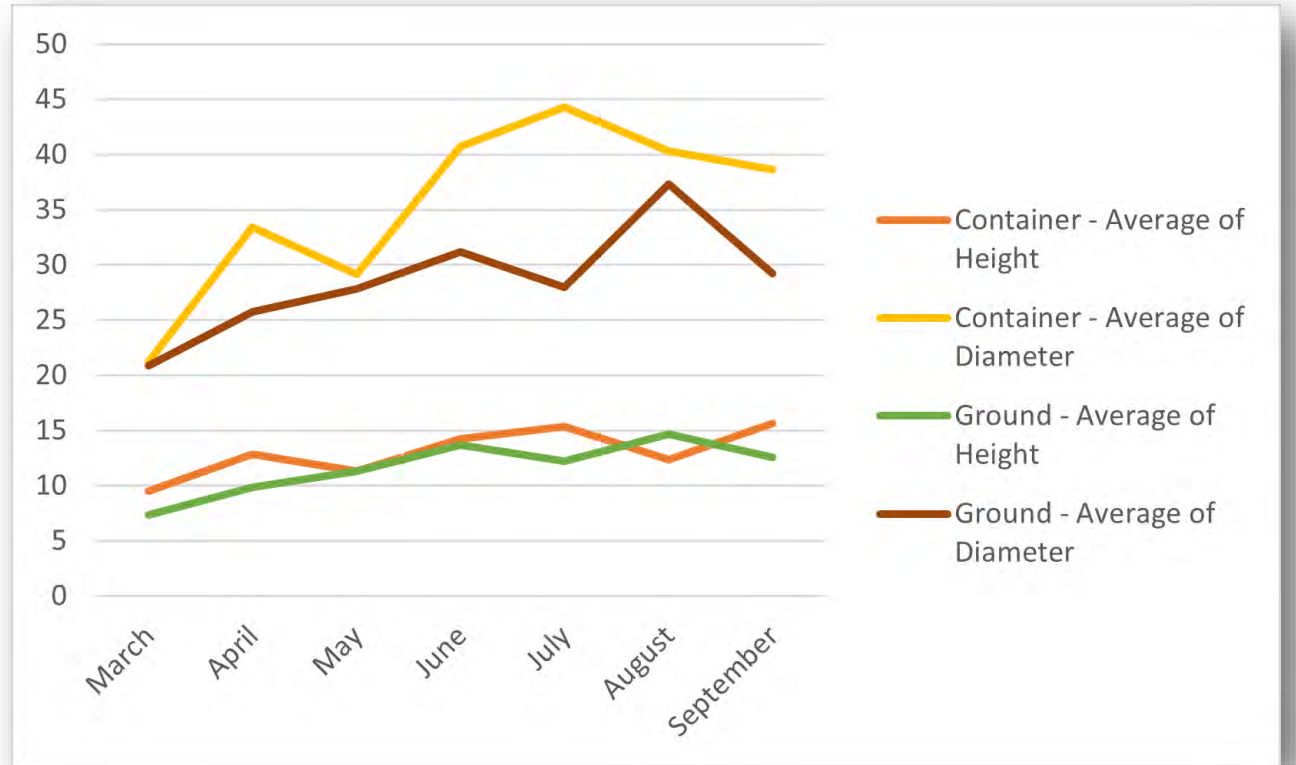
Photo by Linda Rowlett (April)



Photo by Betty Pior (August)

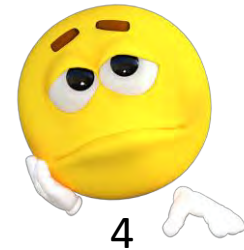


# Silver Lemon



**A+** excellent!

April: 8 out of 13  
 July: 2 out of 7  
 Sept: 3 out of 8



# Quick Comparison of Culinary Thymes in September

	Height (cm)	Diameter (cm)	Container	Ground
English Porlock	23 (C)	20 (C)	Good	Better
	38 (G)	42 (G)		
French	26 (C)	61 (C)	Better	Good
	22 (G)	44 (G)		
German	34 (C)	43 (C)	Good	Good
	23 (G)	43 (G)		
Lemon	21 (C)	44 (C)	Good	Good
	21 (G)	37 (G)		
Silver Lemon	16 (C)	39 (C)	Better	Good
	13 (G)	29 (G)		

# Rose Scented

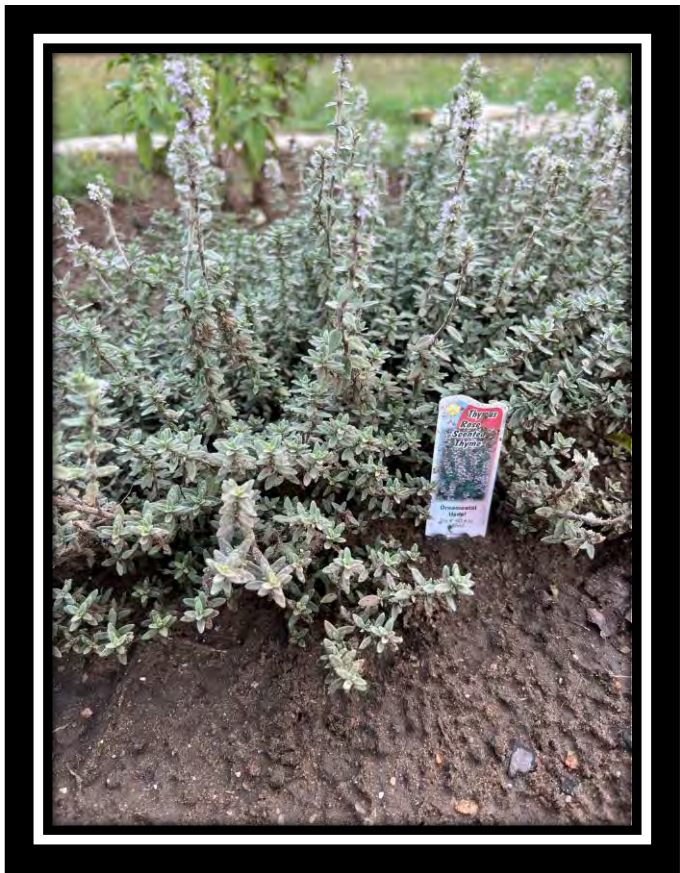


Photo by Kathe Forrest (April)

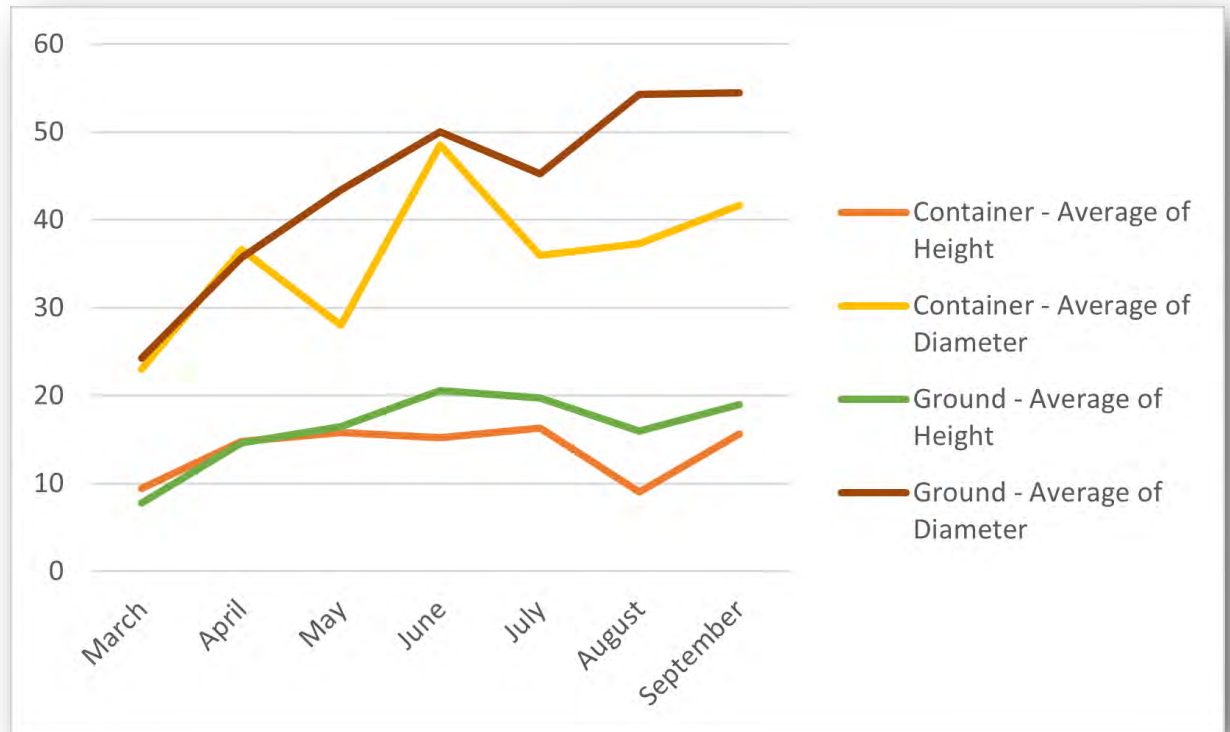


Photo by Joanna Hagler (August)



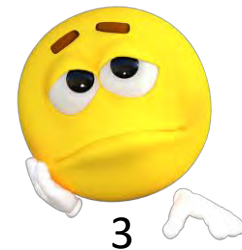


# Rose Scented



**A+** excellent!

April: 9 out of 11  
 July: 3 out of 7  
 Sept: 5 out of 7



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# White Flowered Creeping



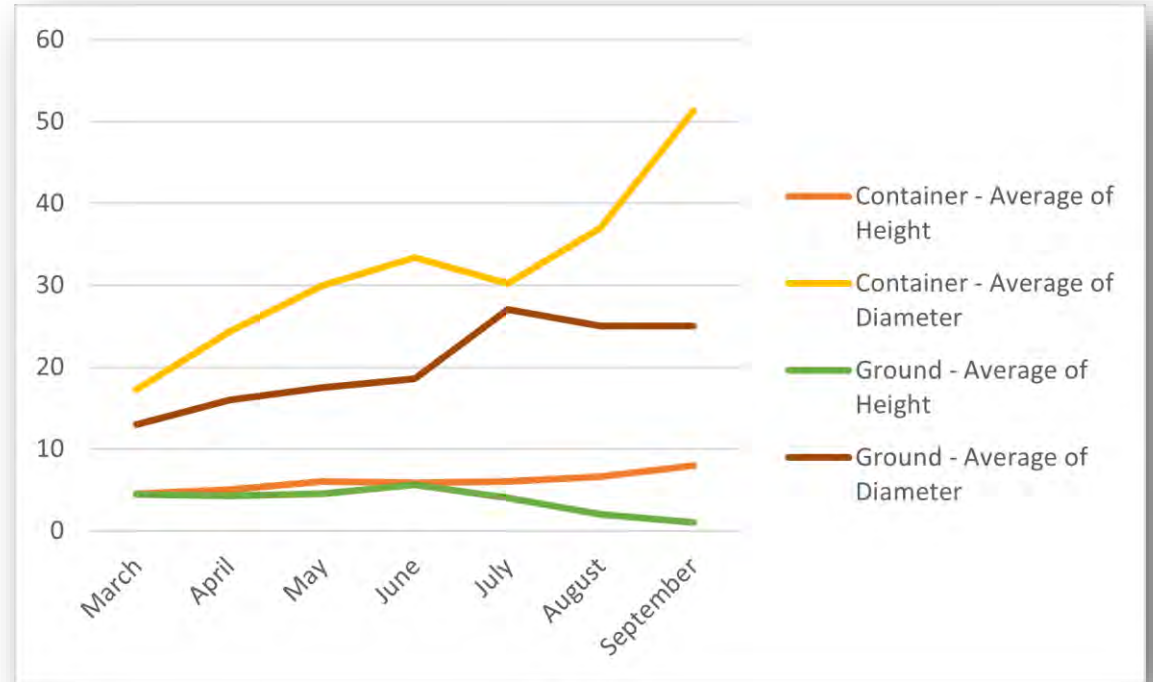
Photo by Susan Yancey (April)



Photo by Susan Bame (June)



# White Flowered Creeping



**A+** excellent!

April: 7 out of 12  
 July: 0 out of 5  
 Sept: 2 out of 4



# Lemonade Cascade



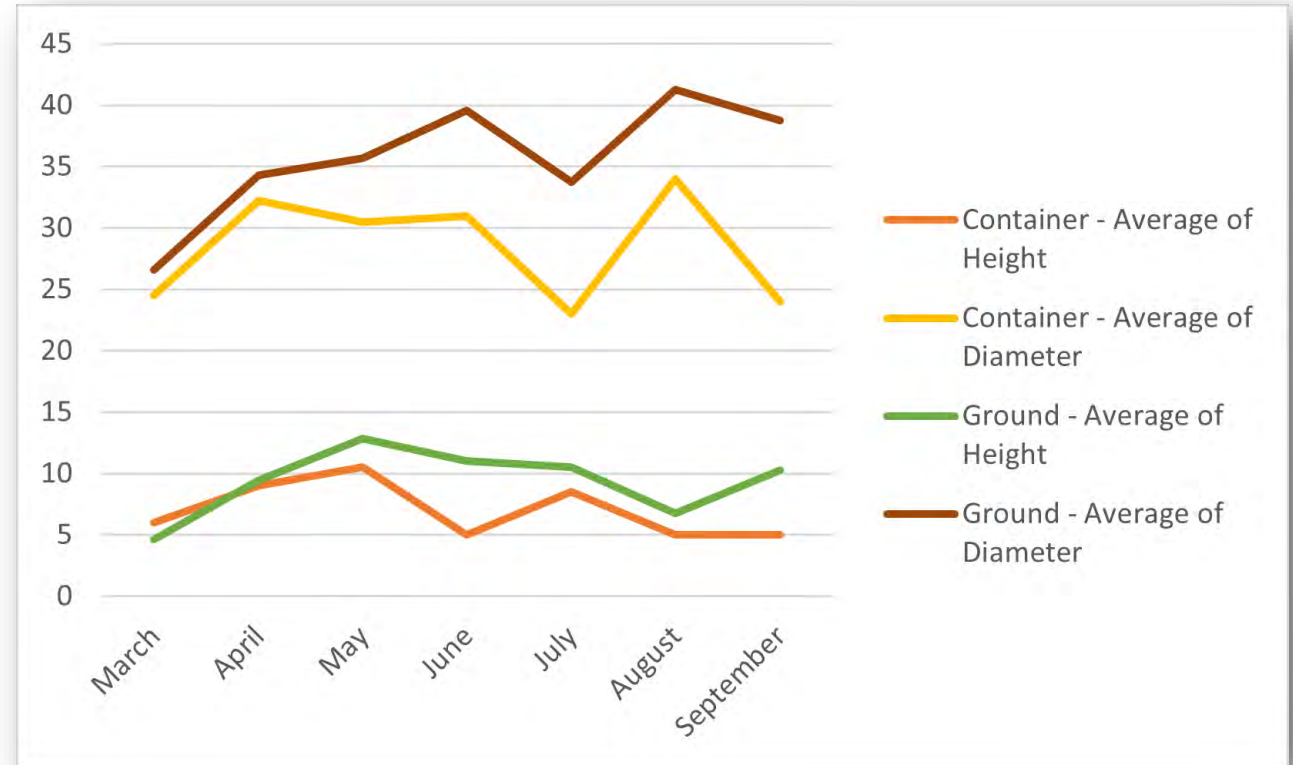
April



August

Photos by Linda Rowlett

# Lemonade Cascade



**A+** excellent!

April: 4 out of 12  
 July: 0 out of 6  
 Sept: 1 out of 5



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# Quick Comparison of Ornamental Thymes in September

	Lemonade Cascade	White Flowered Creeping	Rose Scented
Height	5 (C) 10 (G)	9 (C) 1 (G)	16 (C) 19 (G)
Diameter	24 (C) 39 (G)	51 (C) 25 (G)	42 (C) 55 (G)
Container	Good	Better	Good
Ground	Better	Good	Good

# Lessons Learned – Growing in Extreme Heat

- It's not about water
- It is about shade
- Flowering and growth shut down at 100° F
- Protect those fragile roots - drainage and mulch

# HSG Member Sharing



# Thyme Samples

- Lemon Thyme Cookie
- Thyme Cracker
- Thyme/Oregano Ointment
- Thyme Bath Salts