

# Did You Know?



## **Bay – *Laurus nobilis***

- Also known as sweet bay, laurel, sweet laurel, Grecian bay, Grecian laurel or Turkish bay.
- California bay leaves are a different plant (*Umbellularia californica*) and don't confuse bay with Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) which is an evergreen shrub with poisonous leaves.
- It is a broadleaf evergreen tree, pyramidal in shape and hardy to USDA Zones 8, though it may be grown in a container as a houseplant.
- The tree is dioecious (male and female flowers are on separate trees) and purplish-black berries form on the female tree if pollinated.
- In Greek mythology, the woodland nymph Daphne was turned into a bay tree by her father to save her from the sun god Apollo who had fallen in love with her.
- Ancient Greeks believed their dreams would come true after sleeping on a bed of laurel twigs and inhaling the spicy fragrance.
- Crowns of bay leaves were awarded to the victors of the first Olympic games in Greece.
- Baccalaureate degrees received by college students comes from the Latin *bacca lauri*, meaning "laurel berries". In Greece and Rome, exceptional scholars were honored with wreaths of bay. This is also where the term "Poet Laureate" comes from.
- Bay leaves are added to many different kinds of sweet and savory dishes, from cultures around the world. They are removed before serving due to their leathery texture.
- Most recipes listing bay leaf in the ingredients are referring to *Laurus nobilis* (rather than California bay).