

Hyssop by iris Curteis

In the calcium rich soils, in the dry places, the stony sundrenched sites you may find a half-shrub, or herbal clump, Jonathon starts, he belongs to the same family as Rosemarin, Sage, Lavender, and Thyme. He is a Lamiaceae; a lip-blossomer, his blossoms, though very small, are shaped like tiny mouths, delicate lips that open easily to buzzing and foraging bees. *Ysop* is his Hebrew name a word for holy herb. In medieval and renaissance Cloister gardens Hyssop was honoured too and revered for his healing capacities – but also for the savory aromatic qualities that he lent to many dishes. But he has spread across the world bringing such gifts with him, always in shades of blue, violet, indigo, always bringing health.

See him travelling hot sunny, stony paths, dressed in a cloak of deep blue, not plodding, by stepping out with a lively pace, cheerful and light footed. Who would guess, on first glance, that he bears the gifts of wisdom and inspiration to those who take time to meet and journey with him? He knows rituals of cleansing and purification. Add his powers to water and sprinkle it in places where ... where you feel something is amiss, dark, unclean. Let him ward off malevolent energies and spirits and teach you about the healing that comes from forgiveness ... *I know, he says to us, pausing his outer speaking to the room, it is far too soon to speak of forgiveness, but it will and must come if we are to heal. We stay silent and he adds, the Ancient Egyptians used Hyssop's powers in the embalming process. I wasn't about the body; it was all about preserving the soul's connection to the afterlife.*

Turning his soul outward, he continues, until then, perhaps sit awhile with Hyssop. Your thoughts will grow clearer, your nerves stronger, and even if you see that sunny road leading straight towards a gathering storm, even if the lightning forks and the thunder rolls, Hyssop will open his lips and breath courage into you faltering soul.

Jonathon pauses, sipping his tea, asking for a biscuit, and between mouthfuls, tells them that this is an ancient recipe handed down from the wisdom of Hildegard. Please have another he says, smiling, have two, you will need it as waybread.