

MEDICINAL FLORA ON THE KIRCHBERG





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet aims to give visitors to the Kirchberg Parks information about the medicinal uses of some of the wild plants growing freely on the Plateau. In respecting the environment, it is the policy of the Fonds Kirchberg to avoid the use of artificial pesticides and herbicides. Please respect these naturally growing wild plants and do not pick or uproot them.

The booklet does not cover all of the medicinal herbs found in the area. A selection has been made to include plants which have interesting traditional applications and continue to be used by Modern Western Herbalists. The full range of modern applications cannot be covered in depth in such a small booklet. For further information about the ongoing medicinal value of these herbs, please contact the author, refer to the books listed in the bibliography or search out other publications or courses.

The modern use of the herbs is based on centuries, or even millennia, of successful treatments, on scientific research to identify the chemical components and how they interact with the human body, and /or the results of approved clinical trials.

However, as with all medical treatment, a diagnosis should be sought from a trained health professional before any treatment is undertaken. The skill of the herbal practitioner lies in diagnosis, a suitable blend of herbs and an appropriate dosage. Self-diagnosis and self-medication are generally discouraged. Some of the entries indicate possible uses of the plants in infusions, oils or even in cooking. Please note where the following symbol has been used and respect the advice given.



The information is not intended for self-diagnosis or self-medication and does not replace consultation with a medical practitioner.

If you would like to enjoy a relaxing chamomile tea, for example, but are not sure of identifying the plant correctly, or of the safety of gathering from the wild [risk of contamination by pesticides etc] then go to your local pharmacy and buy a small quantity of the dried herb. Luxembourg pharmacies usually stock a good range of dried herbs from reliable sources.

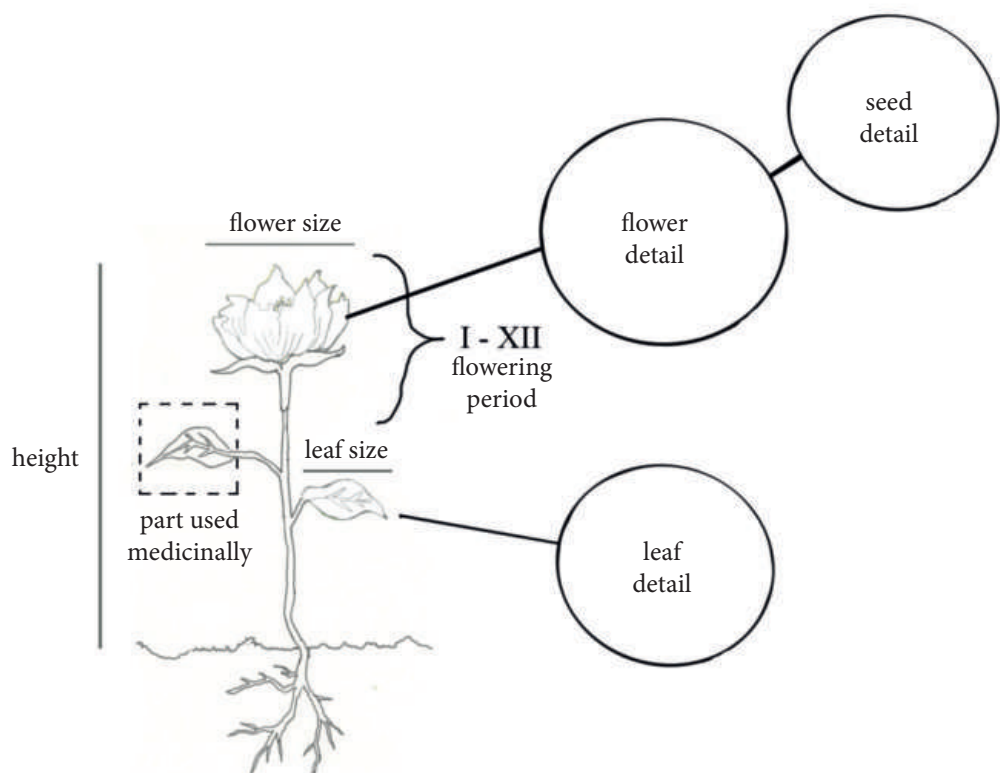
Instructions for making a herbal infusion, preparing an infused oil and herbal honey are given in the Appendix near the end of the booklet.

LIST OF PLANTS

- 8 *Achillea millefolium* (L) Dausendblietchen; (F) millefeuille; (D) Schafgarbe; (UK) yarrow
- 10 *Artemisia vulgaris* (L) Alzēm, Bäifouss; (F) armoise; (D) Beifuß, Mugwurz; (UK) mugwort
- 12 *Bellis perennis* (L) Maagréit(chen); (F) pâquerette; (D) Gänseblümchen; (UK) daisy
- 14 *Betula pendula / Betula alba* (L) Biirk; (F) bouleau; (D) Birke; (UK) silver birch
- 16 *Capsella bursa-pastoris* (L) Beidelschneider, Gänsebrouit; (F) bourse-à-pasteur; (D) Hirtentäschel; (UK) shepherd's purse
- 18 *Crataegus monogyna* (L) Hodar; (F) aubépine; (D) Weißdorn; (UK) hawthorn
- 20 *Daucus carota* (L) Muurt, Wuurzel; (F) carotte; (D) Möhre, Karotte; (UK) wild carrot, Queen Anne's Lace
- 22 *Equisetum arvense* (L) Kazeschwanz; (F) prêle des champs; (D) Ackerschachtelhalm; (UK) horsetail
- 24 *Erodium cicutarium* (L) Séisselblumm; (F) érodium; (D) Reiherkraut; (UK) common stork's bill
- 26 *Galium aparine* (L) Kliet; (F) gratteron; (D) kletterndes Labkraut; (UK) clivers, cleavers, goosegrass, Sticky Willie
- 28 *Galium odoratum* (L) Bettstréi; (F) aspérule odorante; (D) Waldmeister; (UK) sweet woodruff
- 30 *Geranium Robertianum* (L) Auerblumm, Rupeschkraut; (F) herbe à Robert; (D) Ruprechtskraut, Stinkender Storchschnabel; (UK) herb Robert
- 32 *Geum urbanum* (L) Däiwelskraut, Igelkraut; (F) benoîte; (D) Nelkenwurz; (UK) herb bennet, wood avens
- 34 *Hypericum perforatum* (L) Haartnol; (F) millepertuis perforé; (D) Johanniskraut, Wundkraut; (UK) St John's Wort
- 36 *Lapsana communis* (L) Päerdsknapp; (F) lampsane commune; (D) Rainkohl; (UK) nipplewort

- 38 *Matricaria recutita* / *Chamomilla recutita* (L) Kamilleblumm; (F) camomille; (D) Kamille, echte Kamille; (UK) chamomile, German chamomile
- 40 *Medicago sativa* (L) éiwigie Kléi, Geissraute; (F) luzerne; (D) Luzerne; (UK) lucerne, alfalfa
- 42 *Onopordum acanthium* (L) Ieselsdäschtel; (F) Chardon aux ânes; (D) Eselsdistel; (UK) cotton thistle, scotch Thistle
- 44 *Origanum vulgare* (L) Léiffrabettstréi; (F) origan; (D) Dost; (UK) wild marjoram, oregano
- 46 *Papaver rhoeas* (L) Engelsblumm, Feierblumm; (F) coquelicot; (D) Klatschmohn, Feldmohn; (UK) field or common poppy
- 48 *Plantago lanceolata* (L) Weebreet, Weeblat; (F) plantain; (D) Spitzwegerich, Spießkraut; (UK) narrow-leaved plantain, ribwort plantain, waybread.
- 50 *Prunus spinosa* (L) Schléiwendar; (F) prunellier; (D) Schlehe, Schlehdorn; (UK) blackthorn
- 52 *Rumex acetosa* (L) Schlangensauerampel; (F) oiselle, rumex à feuilles aiguës; (D) Sauerampfer, Wiesenampfer; (UK) common sorrel
- 54 *Rumex crispus* (L) Botterblatt; (F) Oseille d'Amérique, oseille crépue (D) Krauser Ampfer; (UK) yellow dock; curled dock
- 56 *Tanacetum vulgare* (L) Wuremkraut; (F) tanaïsie; (D) Rainfarn; (UK) tansy
- 58 *Taraxacum officinale* (L) Äerblumm, Äerstack; (F) Dent-de-lion, Pissenlit; (D) Löwenzahn; (UK) dandelion
- 60 *Tilia x europaea* (*syn. Tilia x vulgaris*) (L) Lann, Lannebam; (F) tilleul de Hollande; (D) Holländische Linde; (UK) Dutch lime
- 62 *Trifolium pratense* (L) dräijärege Kléi, roudé Kléi; (F) triolet, trèfle des prés; (D) Wiesenklee, Rotklee; (UK) red clover
- 64 *Urtica dioica* (L) Brennessel, Bréineestel; (F) ortie dioïque; (D) Große Brennessel; (UK) common nettle, stinging nettle
- 66 *Verbascum thapsus* (L) Käerzeblumm; (F) molène, bouillon blanc; (D) Wollblume, Königskerze; (UK) mullein, grand mullein, candle-wick plant, flannel-leaf

KEY TO INFORMATION



KEY TO SYMBOLS



traditional use



modern use

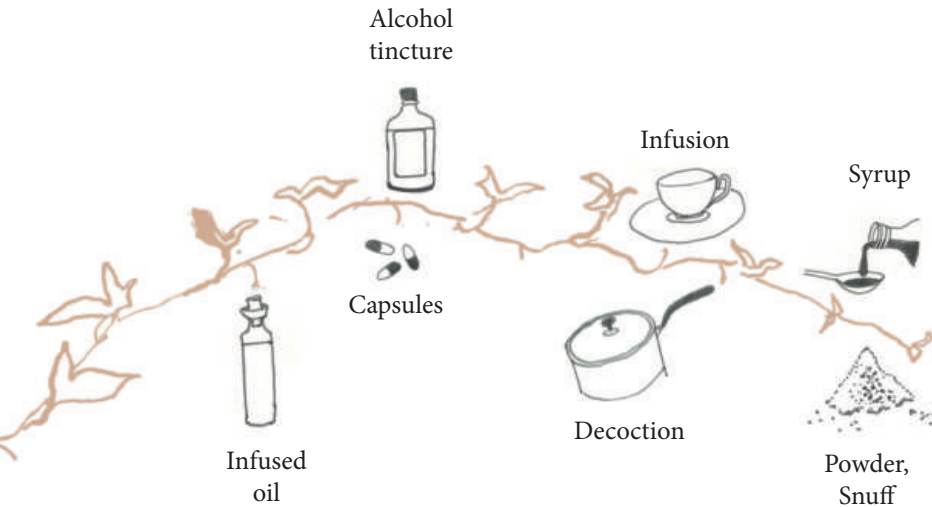


culinary use



Caution

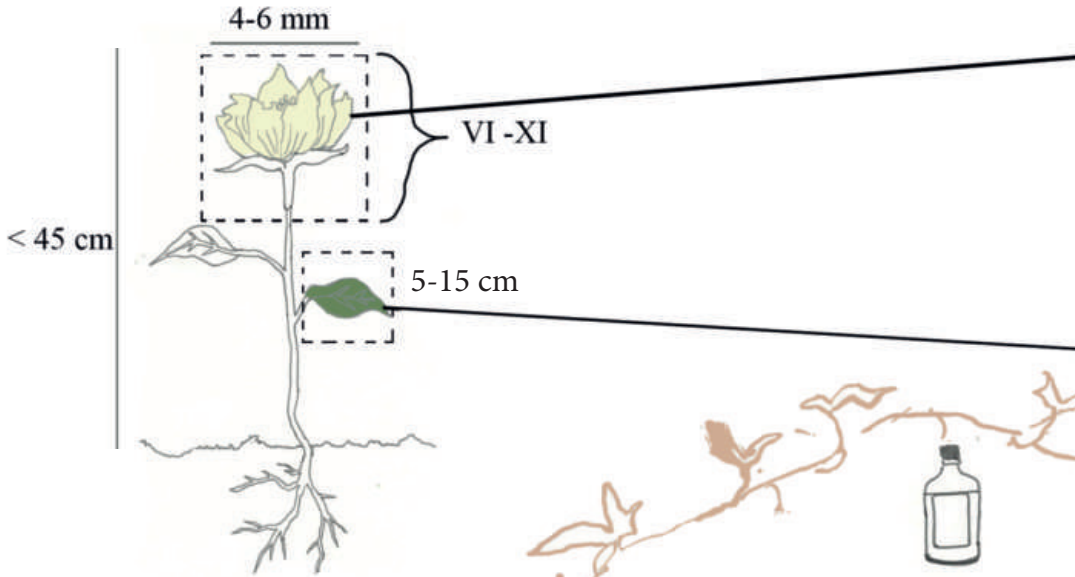
PREPARATIONS



ACHILLEA MILLEFOLIUM

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Dausendblietchen; (F) millefeuille; (D) Schafgarbe; (UK) yarrow



Yarrow was known as *herba militaris* because of its styptic action. The name recalls its reputed use by Achilles to heal injured soldiers. The Saxons wore yarrow in protective amulets and it is one of the 'Herbs of St John' used in old Celtic tradition to protect against evil, for healing and in prophecy.

Its deep roots make it resistant to drought, useful in preventing soil erosion and in bringing minerals to the surface.

Some birds line their nests with yarrow, leading to an assumption of anti-parasitic qualities.

It was used to flavour beer before the use of hops in the 11th century.



Herbalists value yarrow for treating blood pressure, menstrual, digestive, respiratory or urinary problems. The flowers can be powdered and taken as a snuff to treat nosebleeds.



The flowers can be used as a seasoning for salads, soups or casseroles.

The mineral-rich leaves can be cooked fresh, like spinach, or dried as a seasoning herb.

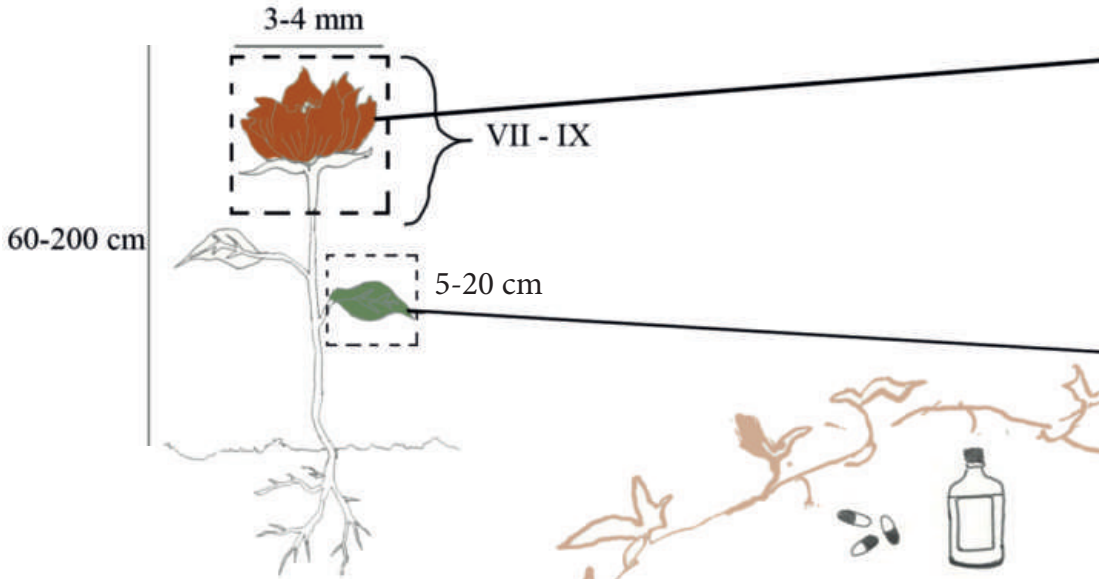


Habitat: Sunny, dry grassland, near paths

ARTEMISIA VULGARIS

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Alzem, Bäifouss; (F) armoise; (D) Beifuß, Mugwurz; (UK) mugwort



Mugwort was considered to have magical powers which protected against evil. It was sacred to the ancient Celts and, after Christianisation, became one of the 'Herbs of St John' and has been brought into churches to ward off evil. It was used to treat digestive and respiratory conditions, bladder, liver and gallbladder complaints.



Mugwort may reduce epileptic excitability, and convulsions in children. It is used as an early treatment for respiratory conditions and is useful as part of a cholesterol lowering treatment. An infusion taken before meals can help digestion by encouraging the production and flow of bile. It has been used as a menstrual support and against intestinal parasites.



A seasoning for meat products and sauces.



Habitat: Sunny wasteland, roadsides

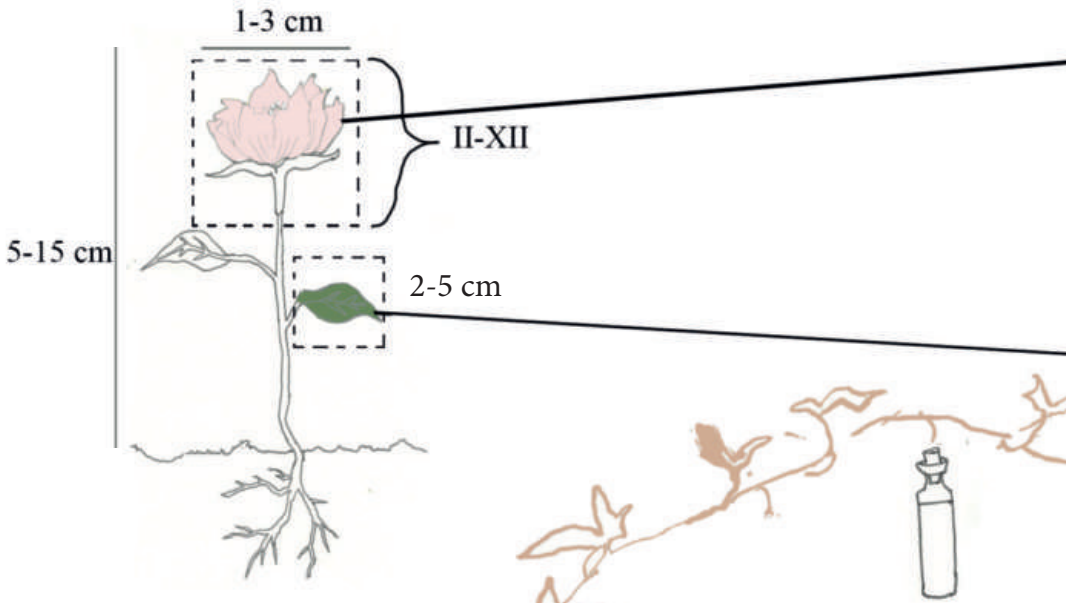


Avoid large doses during pregnancy. Contains thujone.

BELLIS PERENNIS

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Maargr it(chen); (F) p querette; (D) G nsebl mchen; (UK) daisy



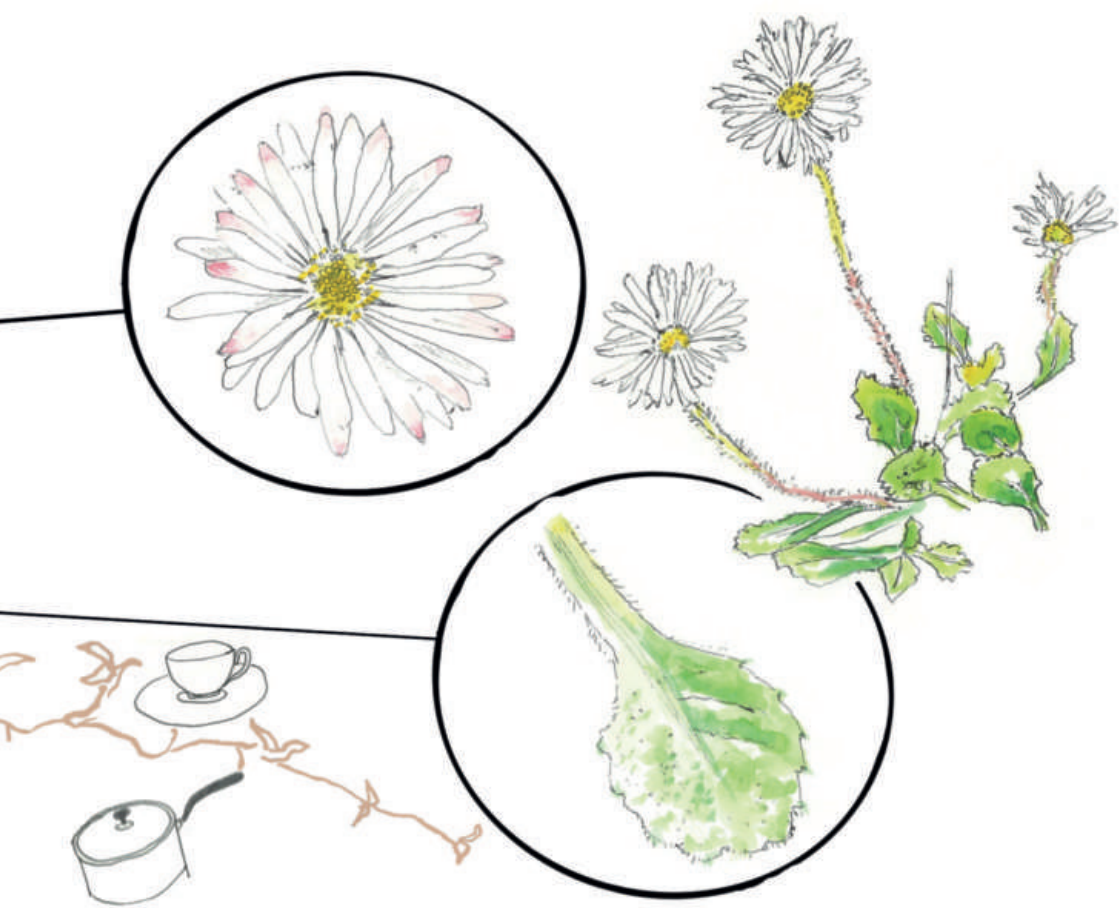
It is said 'Bellis' refers to war and that Roman generals ordered daisies to be collected, crushed and then strips of cloth soaked in the juice. These cloths were used to bandage wounds. The old English name was bruisewort and daisies can be used for bruises, sprains, cuts and grazes, to treat wounds, inflammation, and as an expectorant.



The daisy has been described as "A princely remedy for the aches and pains of old gardeners." (Dr C. Burnett quoted in 'Bartram's Encyclopedia'). It is an external treatment for bruises, cuts, boils and skin complaints. It is used internally for bronchitis, bronchial catarrh and gastroenteritis.



The leaves can be added to soups, salads or sandwiches. Washed buds and petals can be used in the same way. They make a summer punch bowl more attractive - and healthier.

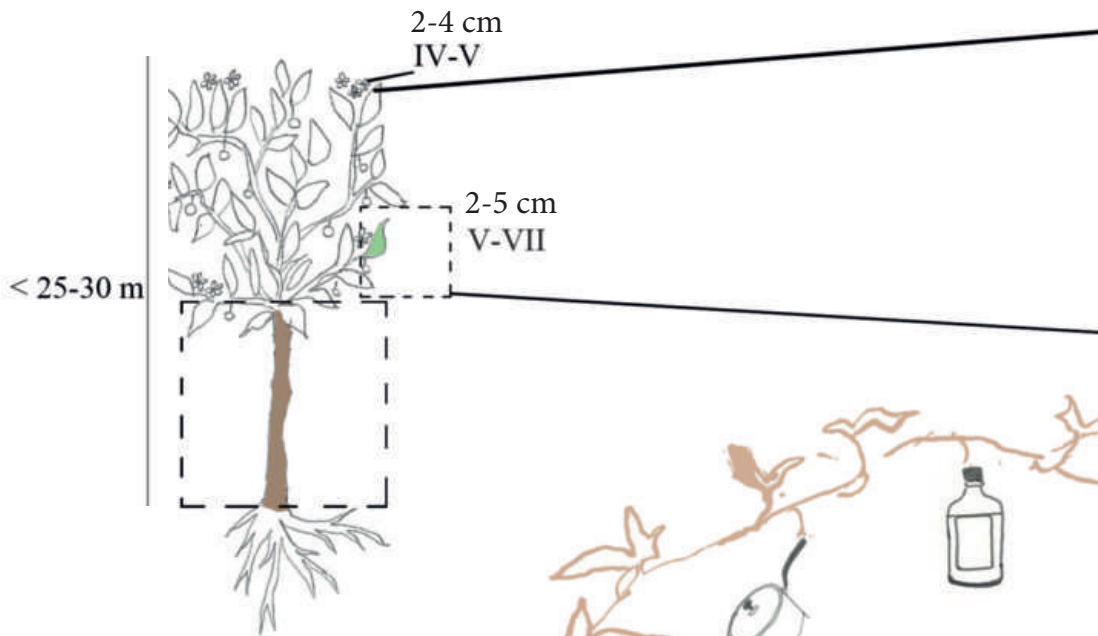


Habitat: Sunny fields, grassland, near paths

BETULA PENDULA / BETULA ALBA

Family: Betulaceae

(L) Birk; (F) bouleau; (D) Birke; **(UK) silver birch**



Nordic cultures have imbued the silver birch with magical virtues. Traditionally, the twigs were distilled as a remedy for rheumatism. This process formed methyl salicylate [oil of wintergreen]. The twigs are still used as flagellants in Finnish saunas. Birch Oil has been used in ointments, such as Russian Ointment or Birch Tar Oil, to treat stiff muscles and joints.



Birch is used to treat kidney and bladder infections. The diuretic action is of value in cases of poor renal function associated with cardiac weakness, gout and rheumatic pain. This also helps in cystitis, prostatitis and the expulsion of kidney stones. The anti-viral and anti-tumour qualities are valuable in topical treatments against warts - use a strong infusion directly on warts.



Add fresh, young leaves to spring salads along with dandelion, cress and corn salad.

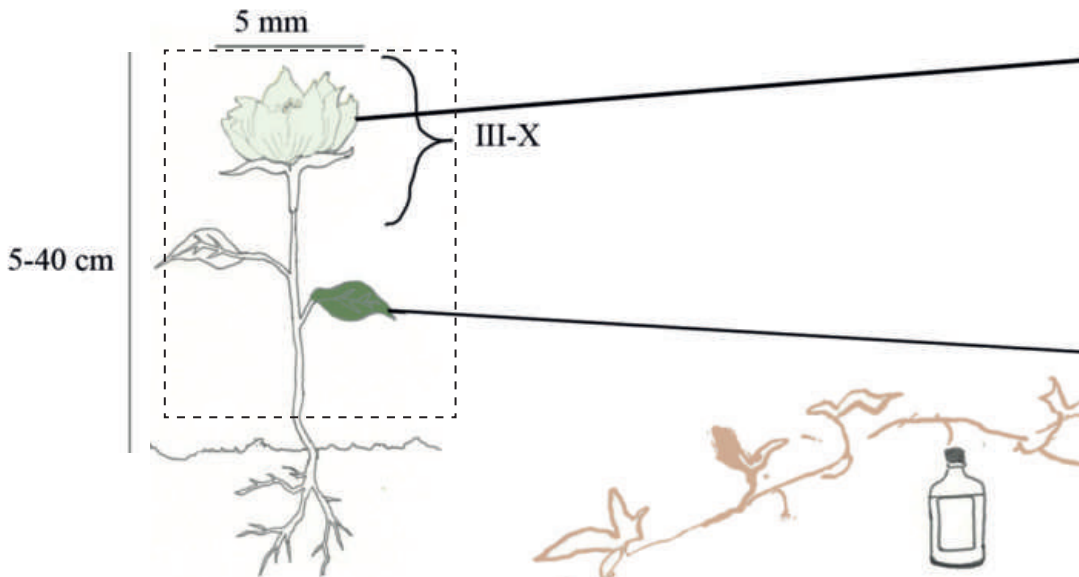


Habitat: Damp, low-calcium soil

CAPSELLA BURSA—PASTORIS

Family: Brassicaceae / Cruciferae

(L) Beidelschneider, Gänsebrout; (F) bourse-à-pasteur; (D) Hirtentäschel; (UK) shepherd's purse



There is evidence of this plant's use in a 10th century Norse settlement in Greenland, and even in Neolithic times. Shepherd's purse has been used to treat fevers caused by parasitic infection such as malaria and, in mediaeval times, midwives used shepherd's purse to stop uterine bleeding.

The name may originate from the shape of small leather pouches carried by shepherds. It was so important as a medicinal herb that the early settlers carried it to the "New World".

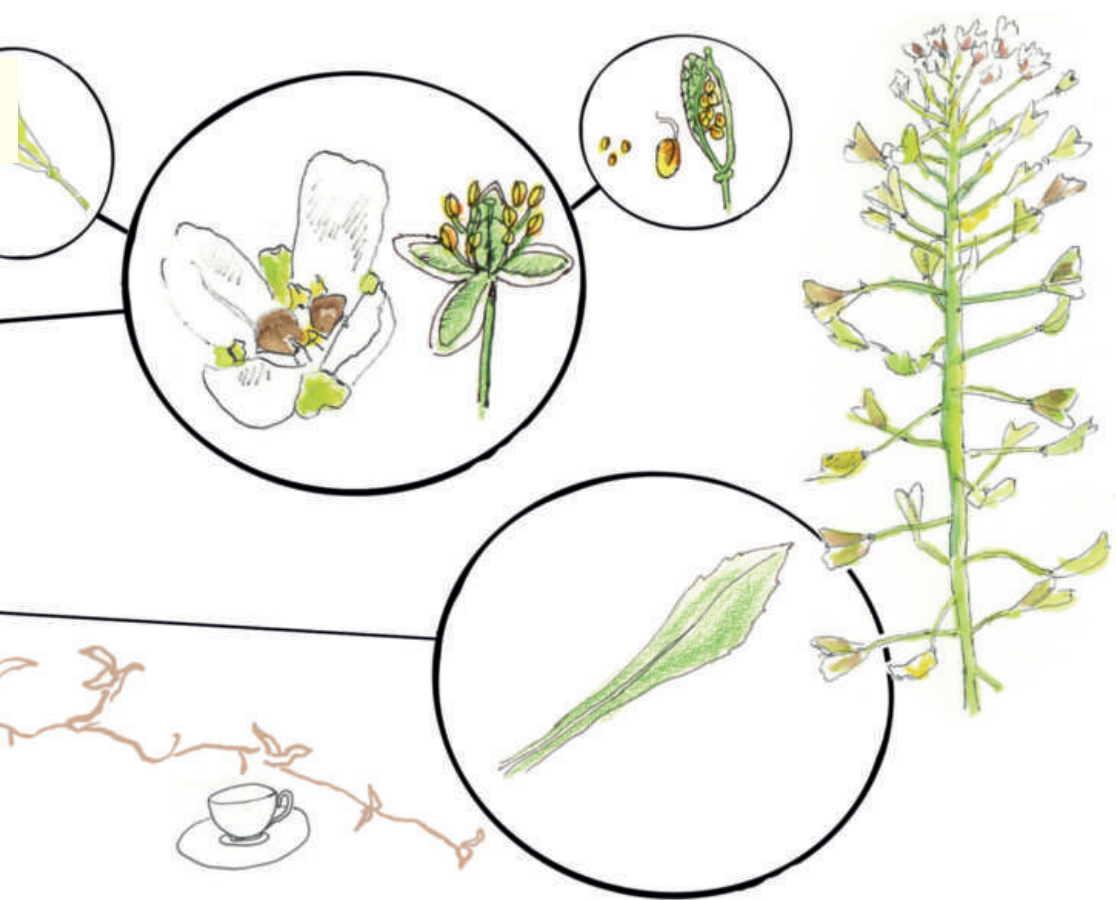
If cows eat large quantities of shepherd's purse, the flavour of the milk may be affected. It was used to stop diarrhoea in young calves, as well as in humans. If the fresh plant is fed to poultry in the spring, the egg yolks become darker in colour and stronger in flavour.



Modern western herbalists use this plant to treat nose bleeds, irregularities in menstrual bleeding, bleeding from the gut, irritable bowel and some forms of cystitis, bladder and kidney complaints. It may help against easy bruising caused by fragile capillaries.



Only in early spring, the young leaves can be eaten as a vegetable or in salads.

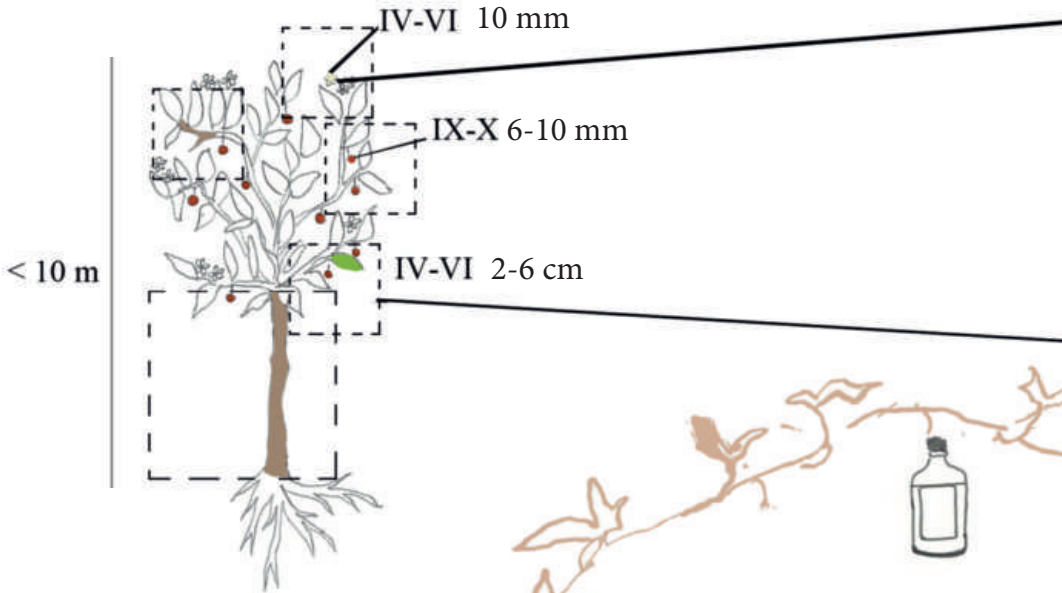


Habitat: Sunny fields, wasteland, near paths

CRATAEGUS LAEVIGATA / CRATAEGUS MONOGYNA

Family: Rosaceae

(L) Hodar; (F) aubépine; (D) Weißdorn; **(UK) hawthorn**



In ancient times, hawthorn was valued as food and as a shade provider. The wood is hard (Greek: kratos) and was coveted because it burned well. The famous Burning Bush of the Old Testament is reputed to be a species of hawthorn, *Crataegus pyracantha*.

Haw was an old term for hedge but gradually came to refer to the fruits of the hedge-thorn.


As with all plants and rituals associated with May, the hawthorn is said to be connected to fertility. It was seen in France as a protective shrub and in Ireland as a fairy plant.

Traditional use was for afflictions such as gout and problems related to the urinary system.



Hawthorn is known to modern western herbalists as “the nurse of the heart”. It is cardi tonic, reduces hypertension and helps to reduce arteriosclerosis. A nerve sedative, it is used in cases of menopausal anxiety.

The bark is used to reduce fevers.



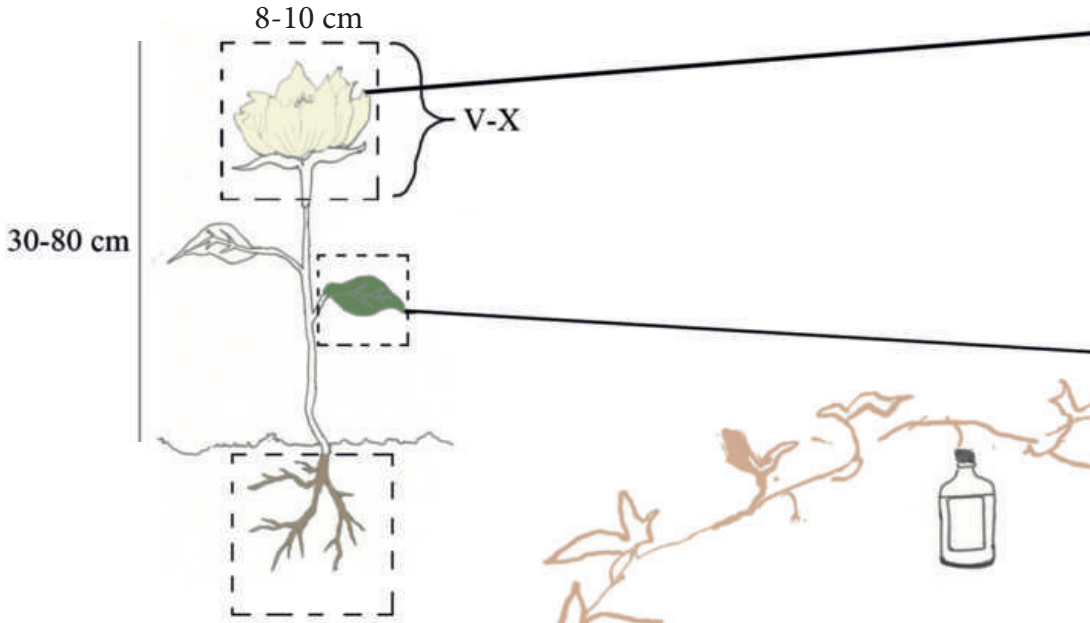
Hawthorn may increase the cardiac effects of medication containing digoxin.

Habitat: Deciduous and mixed woods. Calcium-rich soil

DAUCUS CAROTA

Family: Umbelliferae

(L) Muurt, Wuurzel; (F) carotte; (D) Möhre, Karotte; **(UK) wild carrot, Queen Anne's Lace**



The domesticated carrot originated from a violet-coloured Mediterranean subspecies. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was selectively bred in the Netherlands for its orange colour - due to carotenes which are important Vitamin A precursors.



Wild carrot has a diuretic action and was previously used for 'dropsy'. Carrot is used for intestinal worms in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

As a diuretic, it is useful for cystitis, gout, arthritis and polymyalgia rheumatica. The antilithic action helps to eliminate small kidney or bladder stones. This plant helps to reduce intestinal bloating and menopausal hot flushes. Wild carrot leaves contain porphyrins which stimulate hormone release by the pituitary gland. The domestic carrot can be used to treat intestinal worms in children:

- Eat finely grated carrot for 1-2 days to treat threadworm infestation.
- For an inactive infestation, take carrot for breakfast daily or a mug of fresh carrot juice daily.



Although carrots are a common vegetable, wild carrot root is small and fibrous and not usually eaten nowadays.

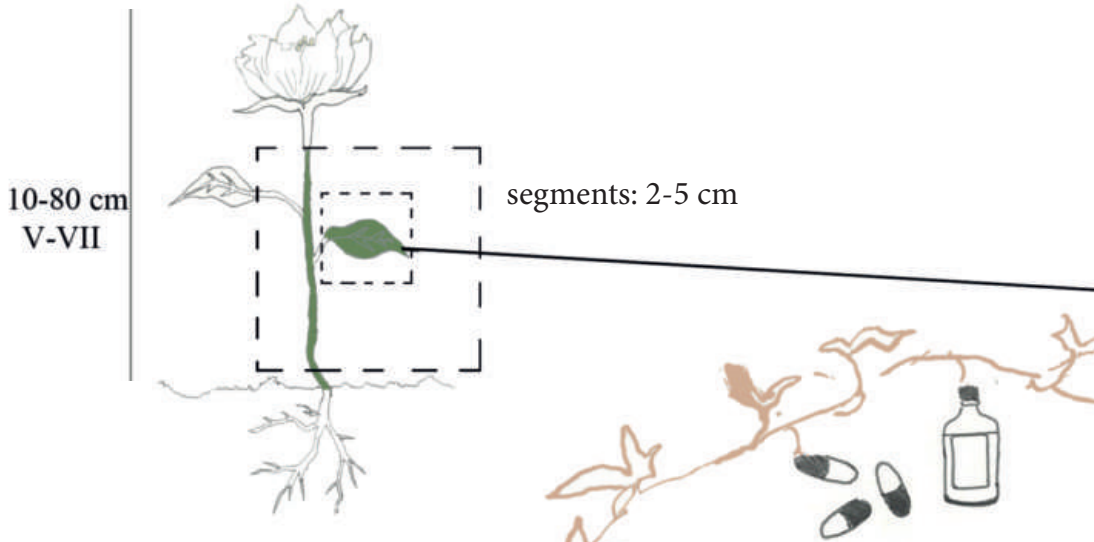


Habitat: Meadows, rough grassland, wasteland

EQUISETUM ARVENSE

Family: Equisetaceae

(L) Kazeschwanz; (F) prêles des champs; (D) Ackerschachtelhelm; (UK) horsetail



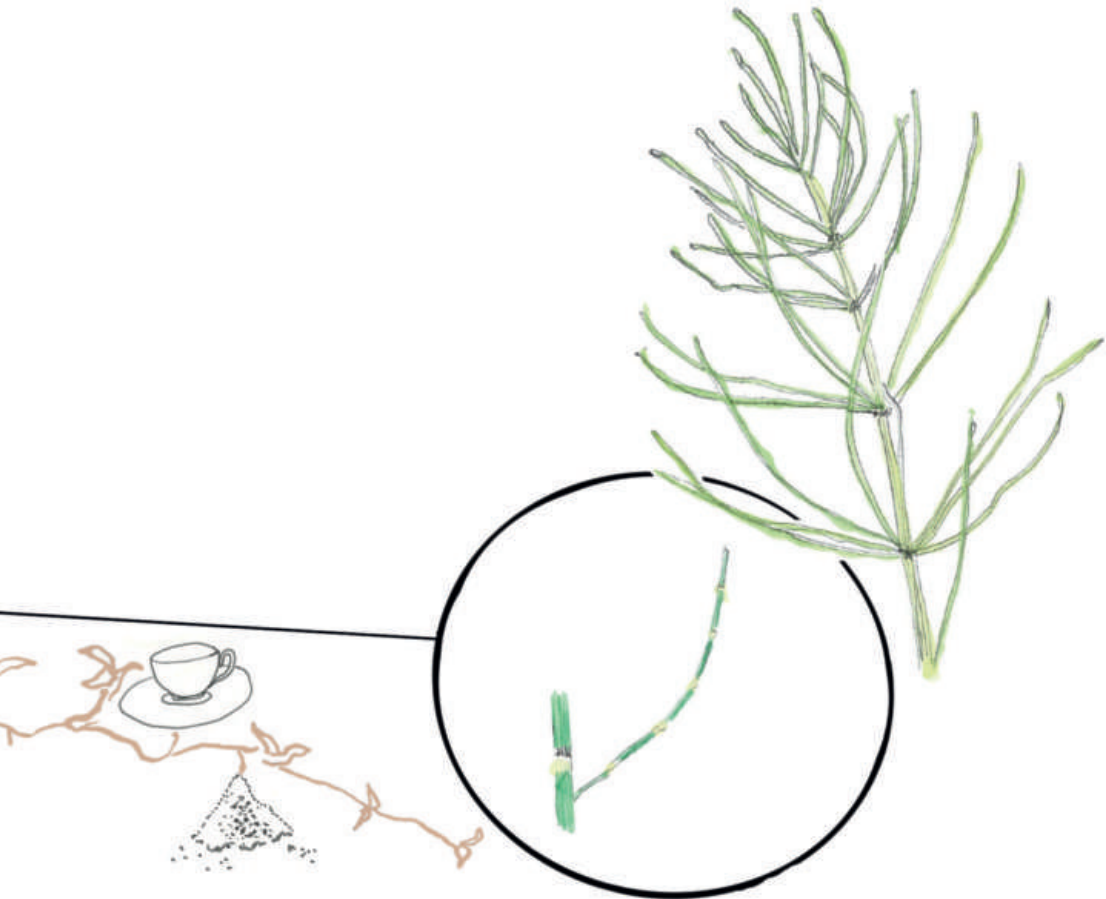
Horsetail appears unchanged from prehistoric times. Examples have been found as fossils in petrified form.

It has been called “shave grass” and “pewter wort” due to the very high silica content of the brittle leaves which were used to scrub pots or to polish pewter or wood. Horsetail has even been used to clean the resin from ‘hurdy-gurdy’ organ wheels.



Horsetail is a valuable remineraliser, used in conditions including osteoporosis (silica aids calcium absorption), atherosclerosis and the repair of connective tissue such as in arthritis and slow healing wounds. It contains useful amounts of silica, potassium, selenium and calcium. It can improve the strength and condition of hair, fingernails and bones.

It has a diuretic action and can be used to treat a variety of urinary problems including benign prostate enlargement. It also stimulates white blood cell production.

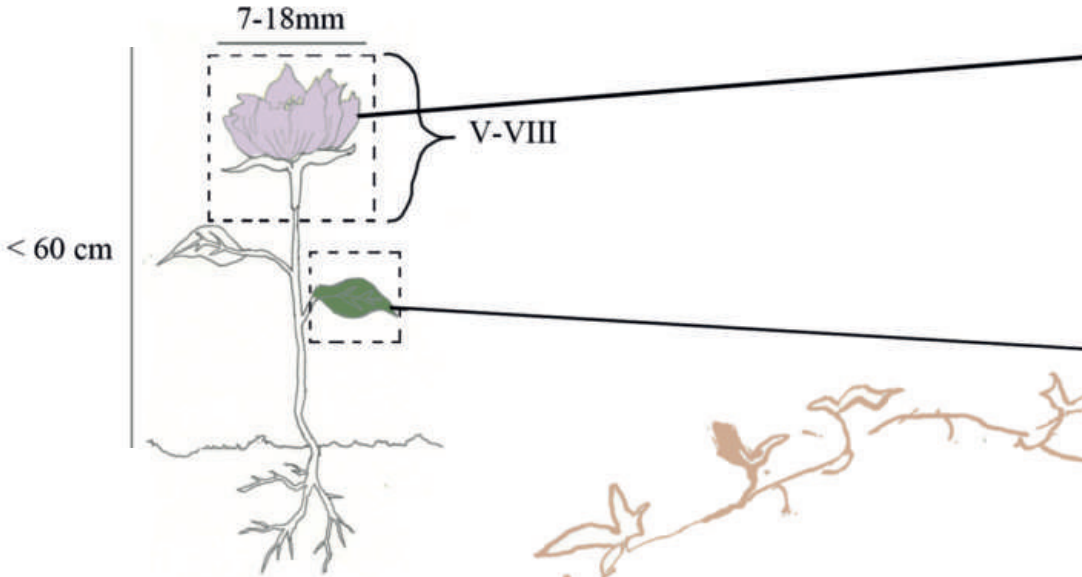


Habitat: Damp open areas, fields, gardens, near paths

ERODIUM CICUTARIUM

Family: Geraniaceae

(L) Séisselblumm; (F) érodium; (D) Reiherkraut; (UK) common stork's bill



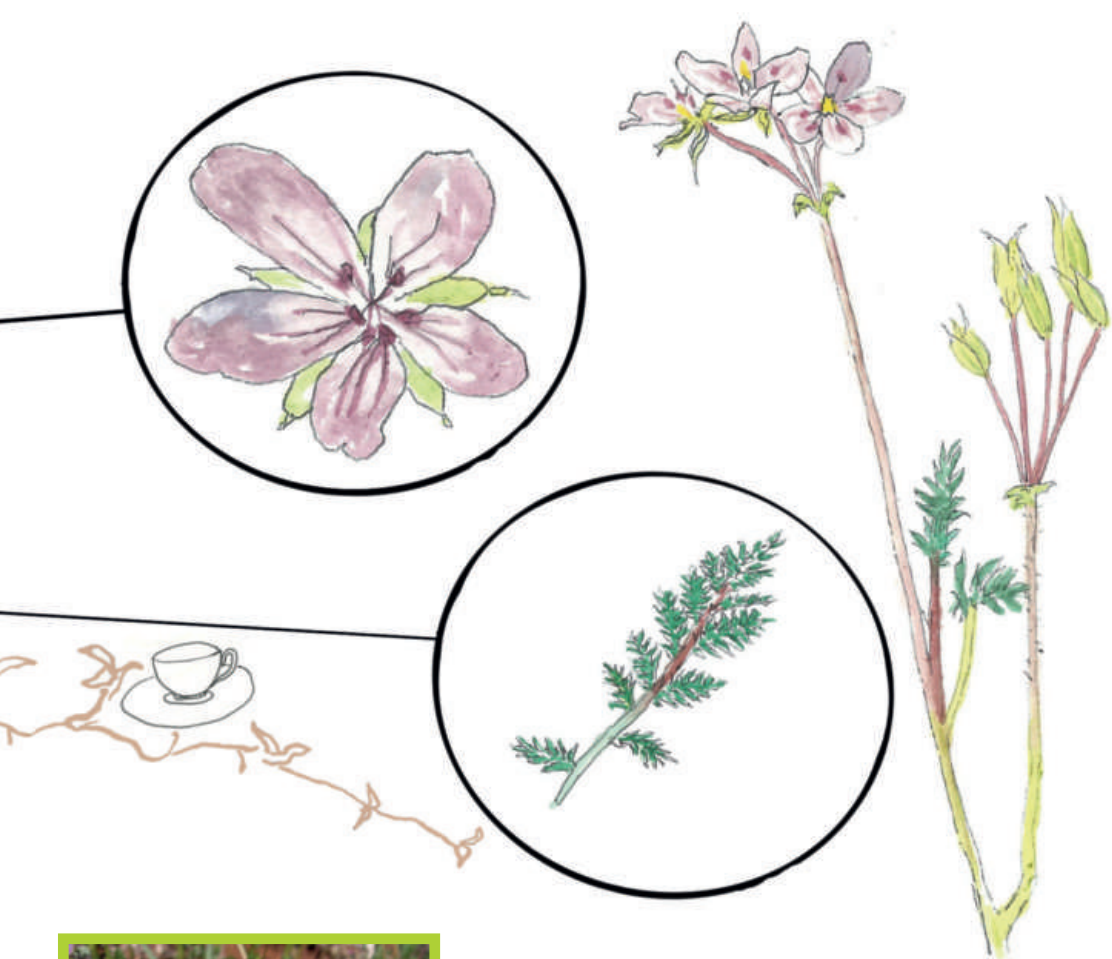
The common stork's bill's name *Erodium* is taken from the Greek for heron, and *cicutarium* suggests that the leaves could resemble hemlock. It was used to control heavy menstrual flow. The root was valued as a green dye.



Although this herb is now seldom used medicinally, it has been used to tone the uterine muscle and encourage the flow of breast milk. It is also useful in stopping bleeding. The high potassium content can be of value, especially in patients taking strong diuretic medication.



Young leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, added to salads, sandwiches, soups or stews. Young stems can be eaten raw.

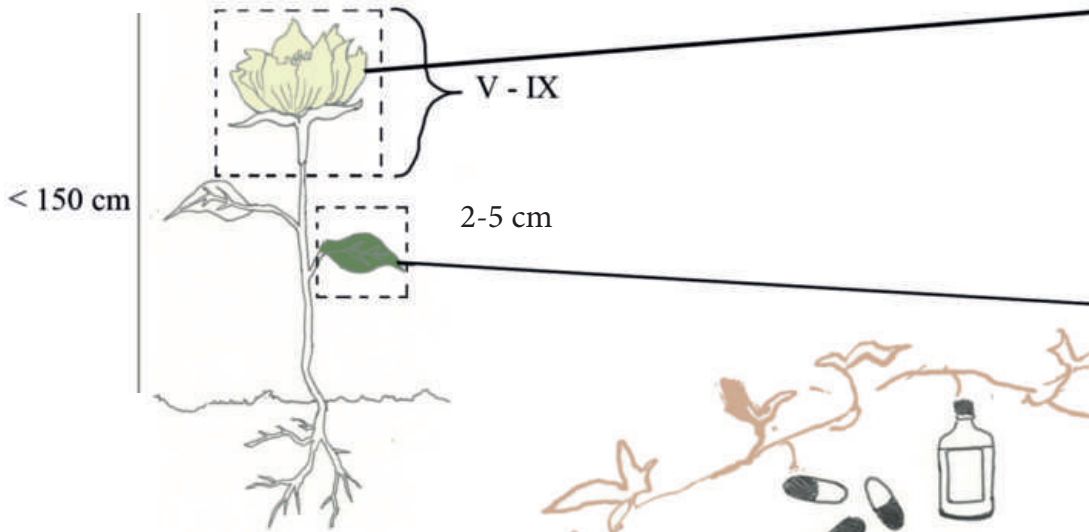


Habitat: Fields, paths, wasteland, dry grassland

GALIUM APARINE

Family: Rubiaceae

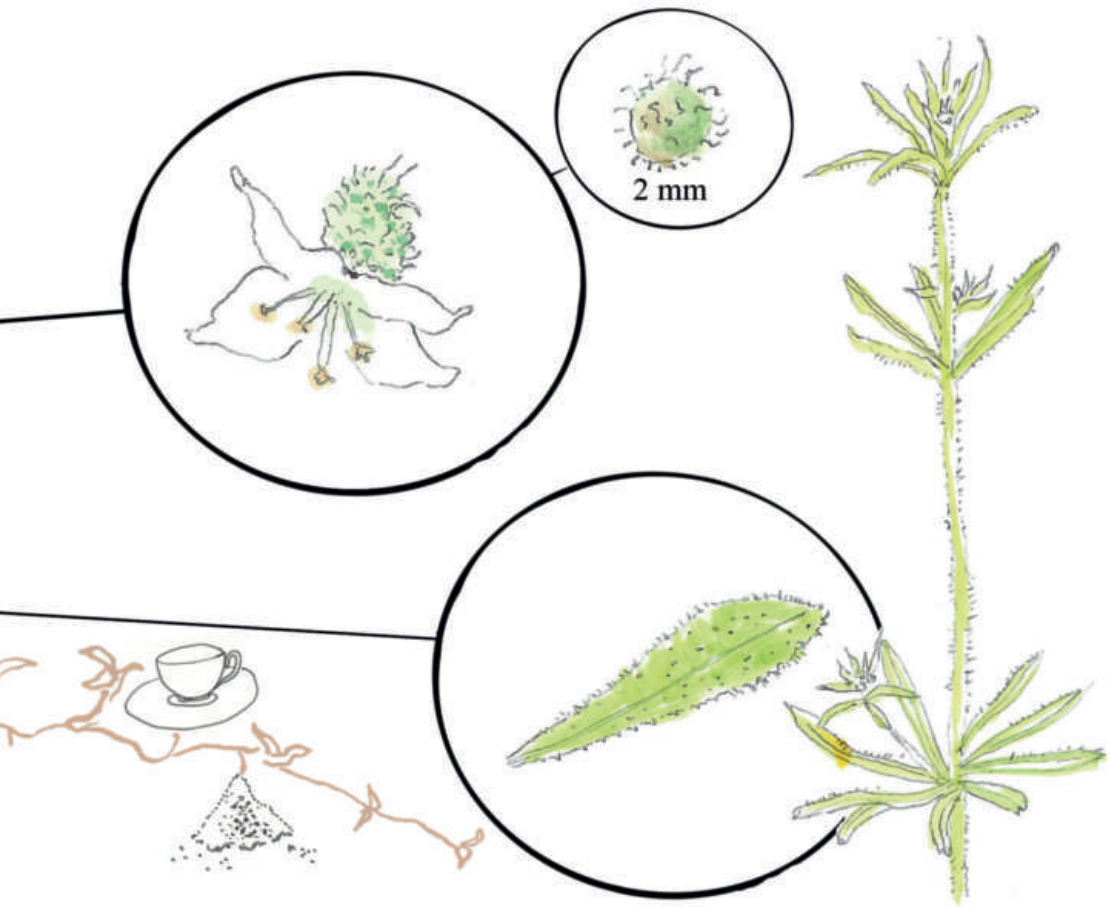
(L) Kliet; (F) gratteron; (D) kletterndes Labkraut; **(UK) clivers, cleavers, goosegrass**



Clivers is an ancient medical remedy whose Greek name, 'philanthropon', arose from a tendency to cling. An old Anglo-Saxon name 'hedge rife' meant a tax gatherer or a robber. The Welsh name, *llour'd ffeirad*, is an affectionate term meaning priest's lice. Geese are very fond of it and it is still gathered to feed to poultry. In Celtic regions, the seeds have been roasted as a coffee substitute. Ancient Greek shepherds used handfuls of clivers to make a sieve. Country dairymaids in Sweden also used it as a sieve to strain milk. Traditionally, it was applied topically to reduce wens & carbuncles. Other uses included the treatment of cancer, fever, jaundice, kidney stones, nerve problems, psoriasis, sores, ulcers, urinary problems and wounds. The root has been used as a red dye.



Clivers supports the immune system by stimulating lymph production and circulation. It has a diuretic action and is used to treat chronic skin conditions such as acne, eczema and urticaria. Use fresh juice for psoriasis. Fresh juice can also be applied to burns and abrasions. Clivers is valued in treating asthma, gout and disorders of the lymph system; helping to improve circulation, especially in the elderly, and to lower blood pressure

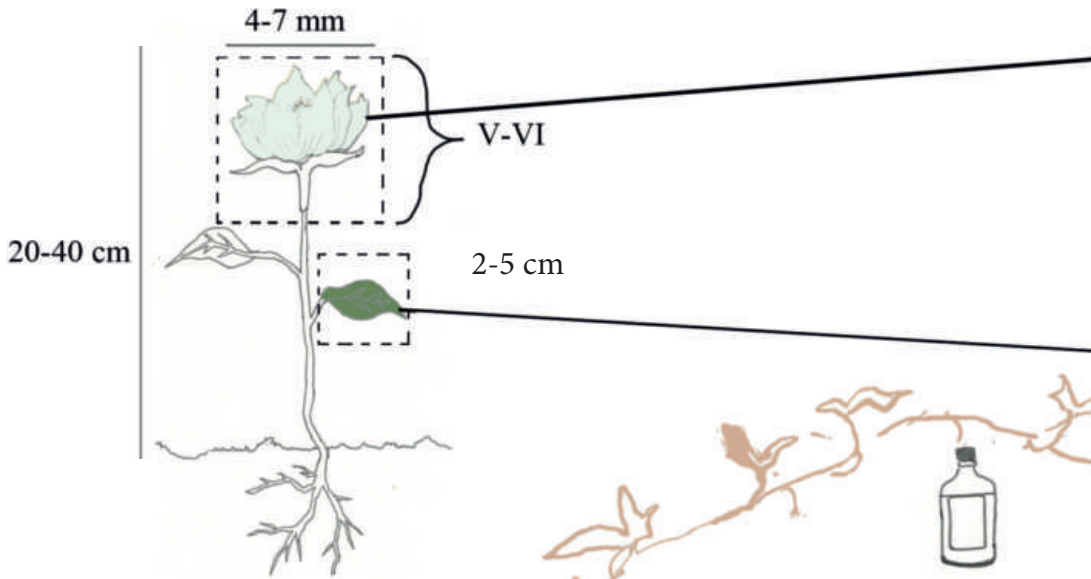


Habitat: Shrubby areas. Path and forest margins.
Rich soil

GALIUM ODORATUM / ASPERULA ODORATA

Family: Rubiaceae

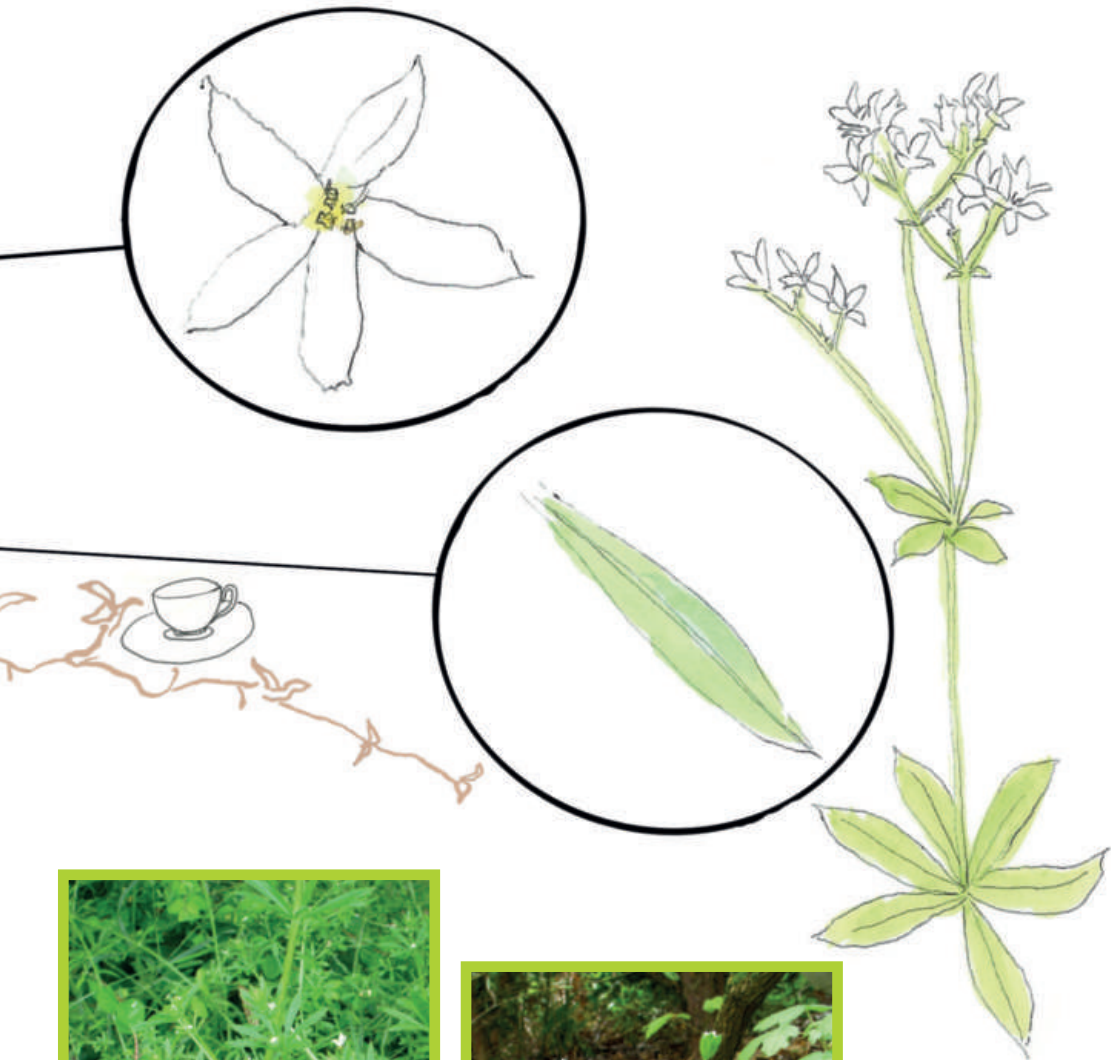
(L) Bettstréi; (F) aspérule odorante; (D) Waldmeister; (UK) **sweet woodruff**



The coumarins in sweet woodruff create a smell similar to fresh-mown hay as it dries. This made it popular for scenting and freshening linen, and as a moth and insect repellent. In the Middle Ages it was a 'strewing herb' scattered on floors to freshen a room and deter insects. It was associated with freshness and innocence and even considered to have aphrodisiac qualities. Before the importation of colonial teas, woodruff was drunk as a tea and was added to infusions or wines such as a May-cup - German 'Maitrank' or French 'Vin de mai'. It has also been combined with other herbs (peppermint, coltsfoot) and smoked as an aid to giving up tobacco.



Although it is diuretic, antispasmodic, mildly sedative and can help digestion, woodruff is seldom used by modern herbalists. It can be used to prevent migraine or to help children with restless sleep patterns. It also supports the liver and digestion, and may be used to treat varicose veins or phlebitis. Sweet woodruff infusion can soothe sunburn or aid poorly healing wounds.



Habitat: Deciduous forest - especially beech. Rich soil

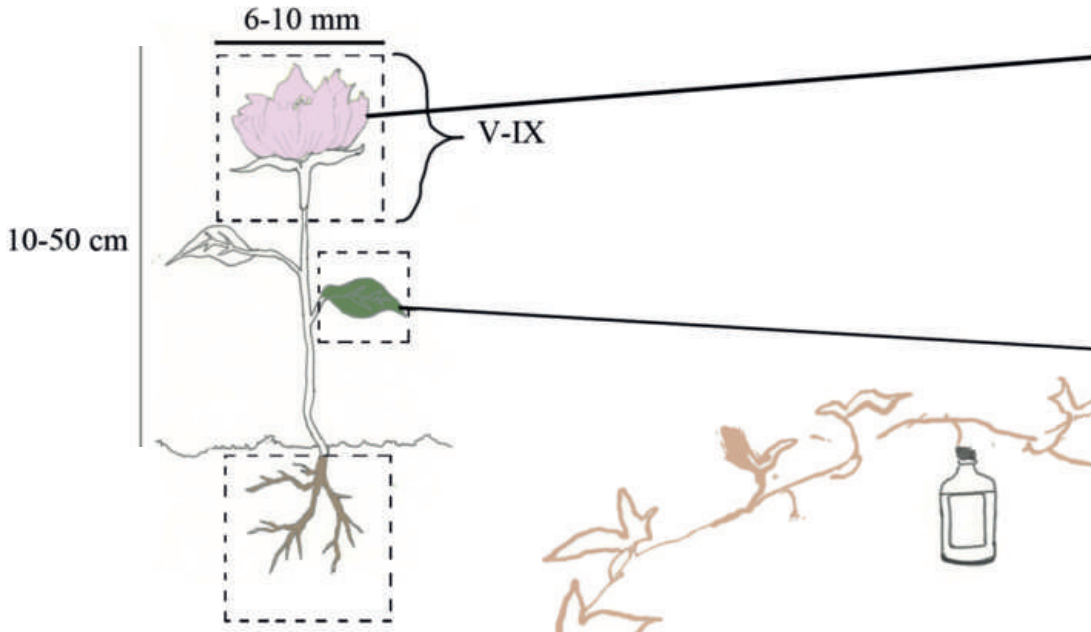


The coumarin content makes it unsuitable for anyone taking anti-coagulant medication such as warfarin or aspirin.

GERANIUM ROBERTIANUM

Family: Geraniaceae

(L) Auerblumm, Rupeschkraut; (F) herbe à Robert; (D) Ruprechtskraut, Stinkender Storchschnabel; (UK) herb Robert



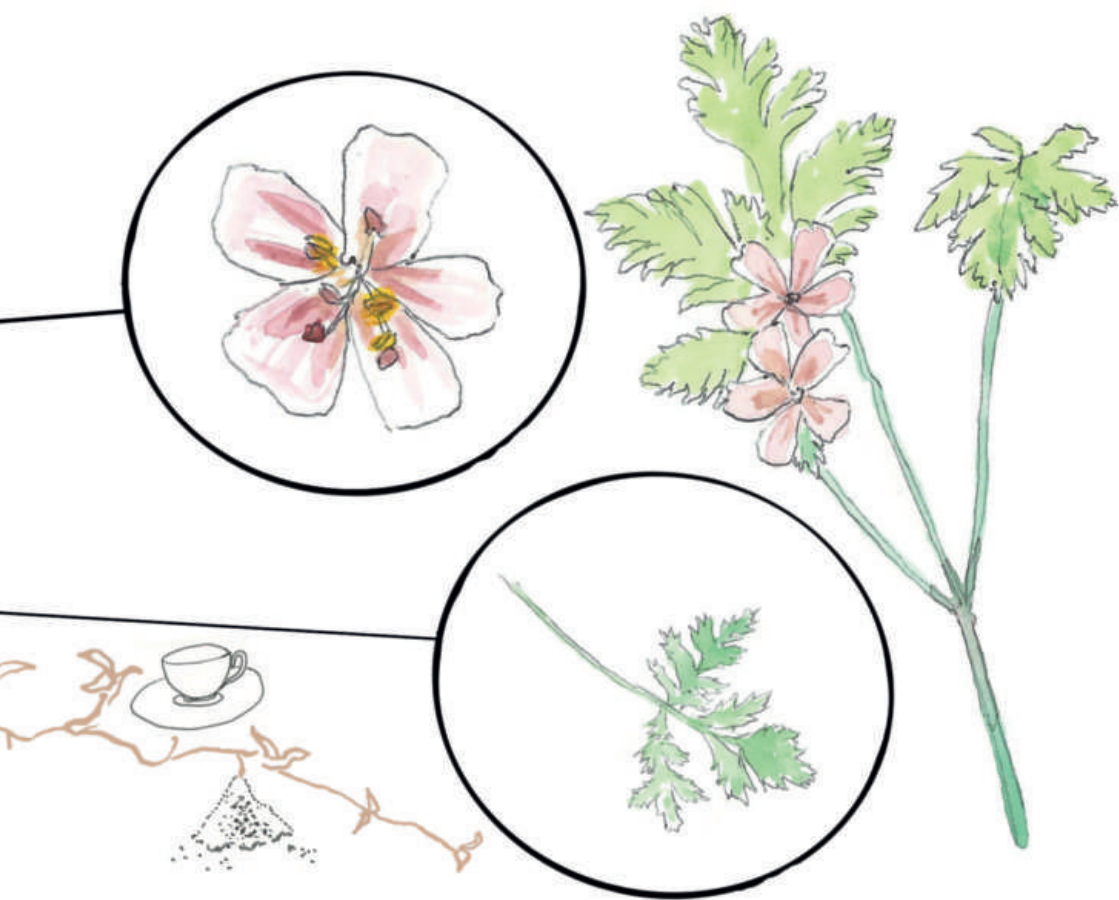
The name 'Robert' may be ascribed to St Rupert, the 7th century Bishop of Salzburg. It has also been said that Linnaeus named it after a manservant with distinct body odour - rub this plant between your fingers and experience its pungent smell. It has even been used to repel mosquitoes.

Herb Robert was used to treat wounds and digestive complaints. Some folk tradition suggests cancer-healing properties.



The plant is still used to treat a range of digestive problems such as diarrhoea, peptic and duodenal ulcers, or to stimulate pancreatic function.

In powder form, it has been used as a snuff to stop nosebleeds, and a strong infusion can be used to treat cold sores.

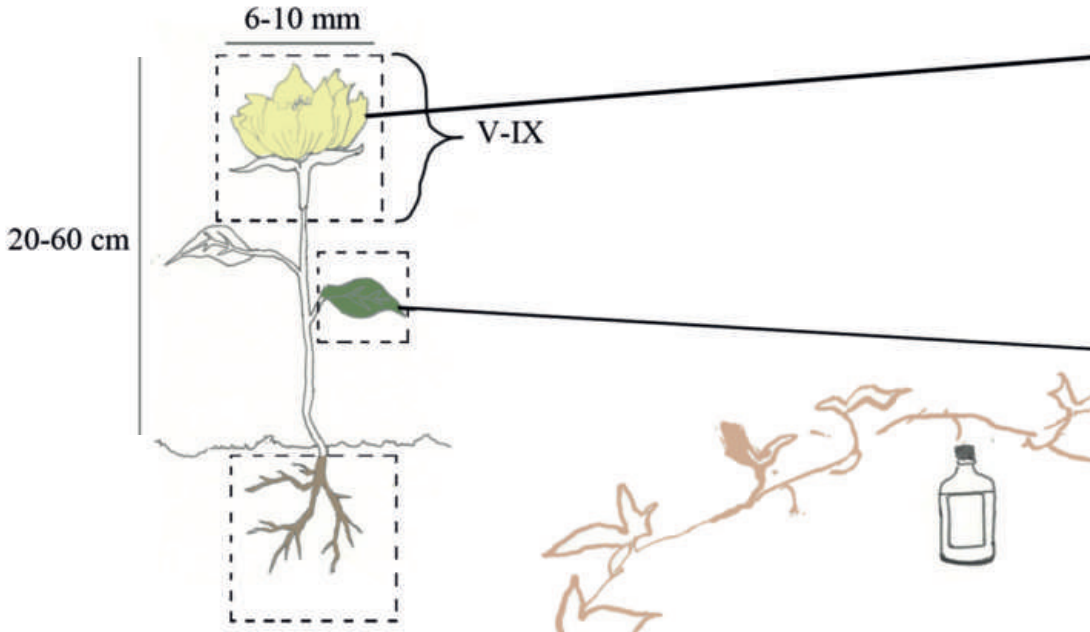


Habitat: Walls, stony areas, wasteland

GEUM URBANUM

Family: Rosaceae

(L) Däiwelskraut, Igelkraut; (F) benoîte; (D) Nelkenwurz; (UK) herb bennet, wood avens



Prior to Christian times, wood avens was called “Blessed Herb” for its beneficial and restorative qualities. The name comes from a corruption of the Latin ‘benedicta’ meaning blessed. It was even worn as an amulet to ward off evil spirits and dangerous beasts. Traditionally, it was used in cooking, to flavour ale and to deter moths in linen cupboards. This could be due to the clove scent of the rhizome - in fact, we can use the wood avens rhizome instead of imported clove in cooking. It has been used to replace quinine in treating fevers.



Modern herbalists value its anti-viral properties and its support in cases of digestive ailments. The rhizome, principally, is used medicinally although the leaves and flowers are also of value. Wood avens’ root should be dug up in the early spring - traditionally on the 25th of March. This herb can also be used as a mouthwash for gingivitis and/or halitosis.



Use in any dish where clove would be used.

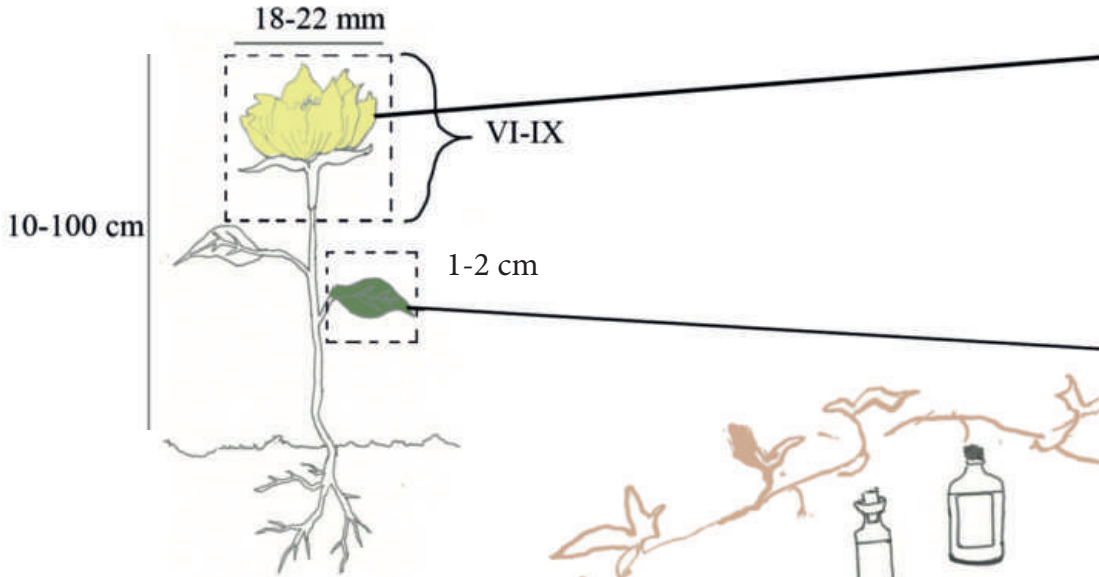


Habitat: Shady, damp meadow, wet woodland

HYPERICUM PERFORATUM

Family: Guttiferae

(L) Haartnol; (F) millepertuis perforé; (D) Johanniskraut, Wundkraut; (UK) **St John's Wort**

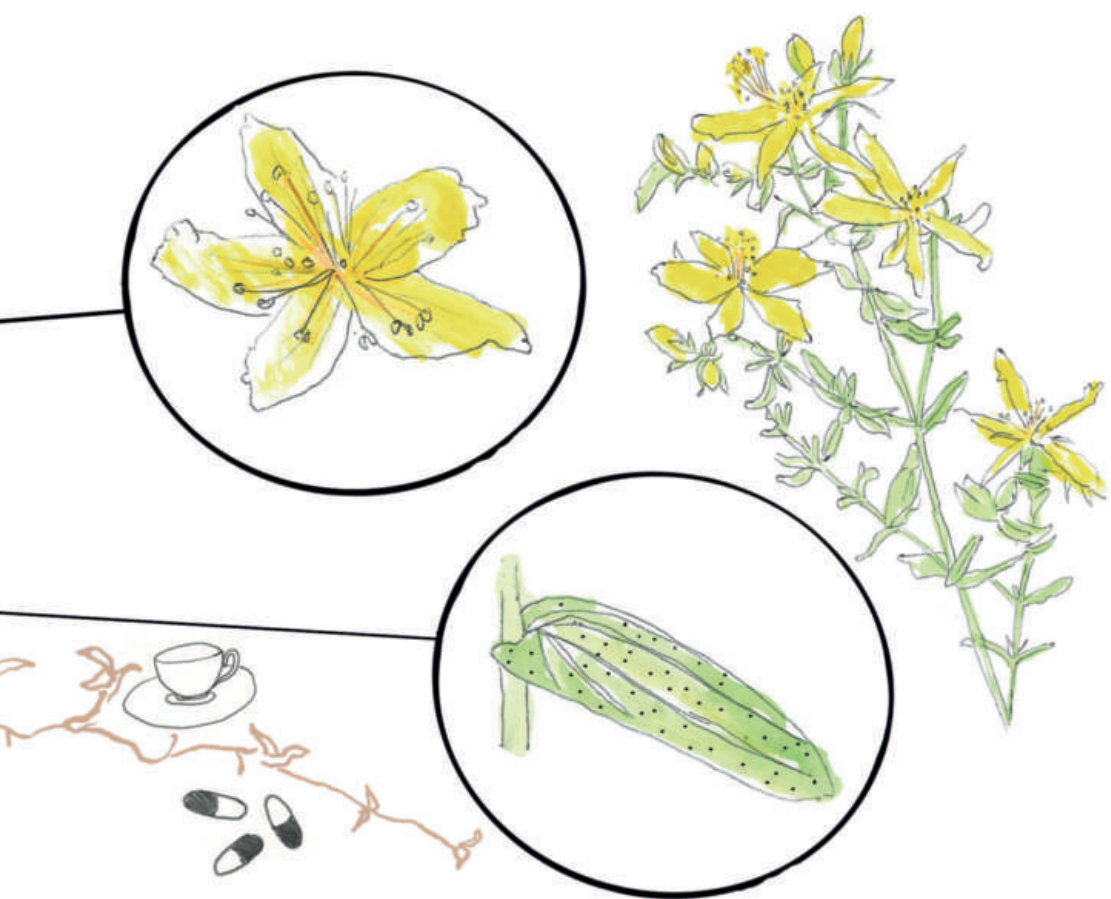


St John's Wort has long been associated with religious and magical powers. It was thought to protect the energies of the daytime against corruption and evil. It flowers around the Feast of St John - June 24th. The red oil is held to symbolise blood, or solar fire. It has a long tradition as a vulnerary herb for treating wounds, burns, ulcers, bruises and skin rashes.



Many traditional uses of St John's Wort are still valid today. In the 1990s, it gained popular acclaim as an "antidepressant". Recent scientific studies support this. It is used to treat viral infections, cuts, burns, stomach cramps and ulcers, nerve pain and problems of digestion, menstruation, kidney function and respiratory disease, as well as skin complaints. St John's Wort, called "the arnica of the nerves", helps to adjust sleep rhythms and to balance mood swings.

The plant's natural deep red oil is heat infused into a carrier oil such as olive or sunflower oil and used externally. An infusion is made with the chopped leaves and flowers for internal treatment.



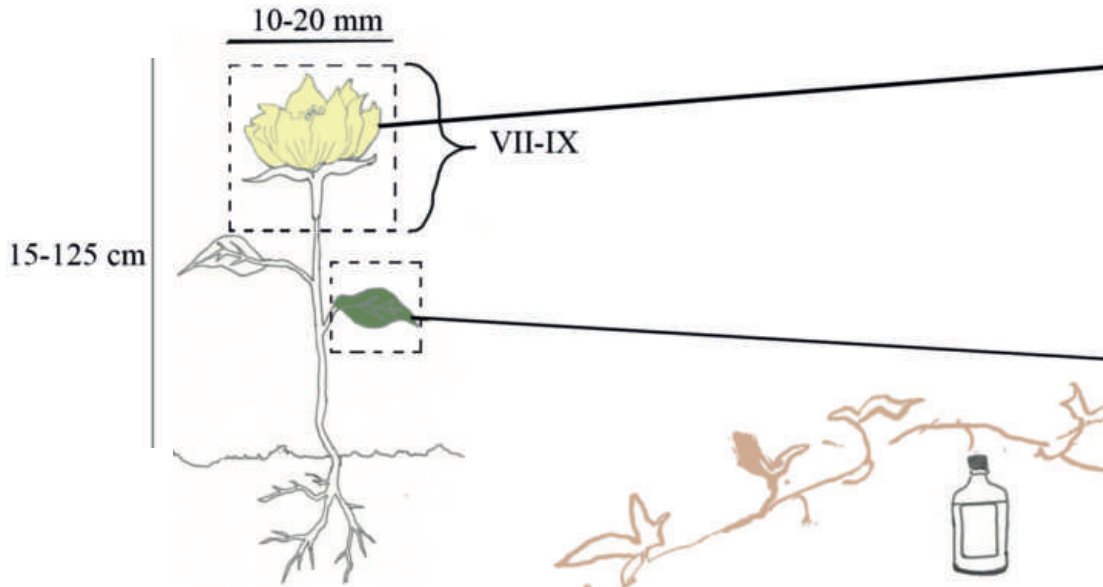
There may be increased photosensitivity. St John's Wort may interact with other medicines such as heart or contraceptive prescriptions.

Habitat: Dry, sunny, open land

LAPSANA COMMUNIS

Family: Compositae/Asteraceae

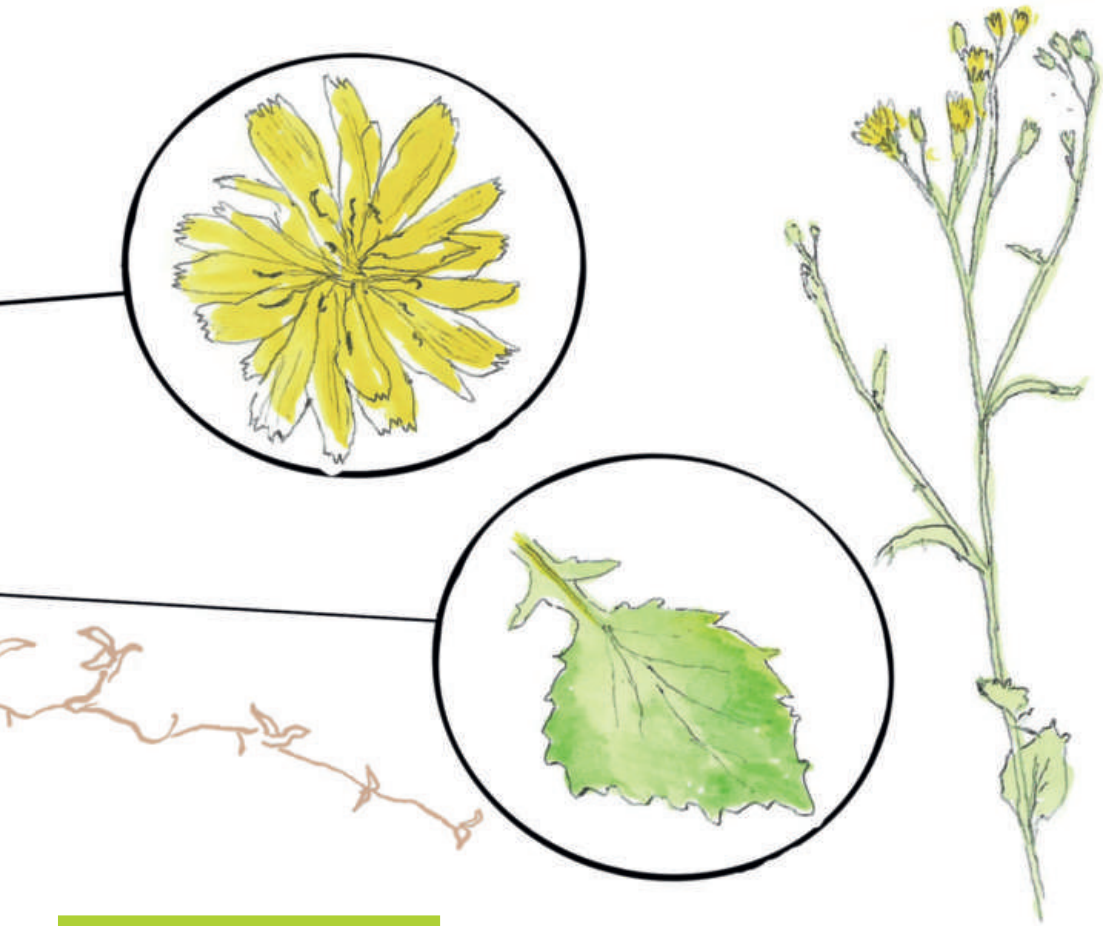
(L) Päerdsknapp; (F) lampsane commune; (D) Rainkohl; **(UK) nipplewort**



In Germany, nipplewort was an ingredient in creams for sore or cracked nipples. The Doctrine of Signatures, which was popular in the Middle Ages, may have encouraged this as the form of the unopened flower buds are often thought to suggest this shape.



The juice is added to ointments to treat chapped skin – especially hands and face. The plant has a laxative action but is also soothing to the digestive tract and is even used to treat pruritus ani. The leaves are diuretic and hypoglycaemic, helping to lower blood glucose levels, and can be part of a treatment for late onset diabetes. The entire plant, without the root, may be used to support the kidneys and urinary system.

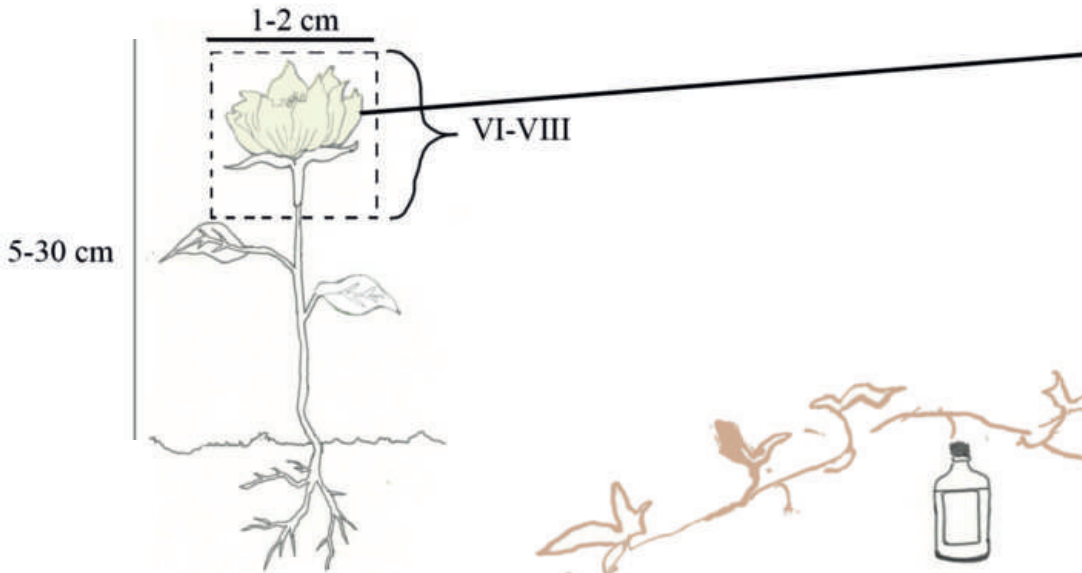


Habitat: Deciduous woodland, gardens, scrubland

MATRICARIA RECUTITA / CHAMOMILLA RECUTITA

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Kamilleblumm; (F) camomille; (D) Kamille, echte Kamille; (UK) chamomile, German chamomile



Chamomile, known as the 'plant's physician', is a good companion plant for ailing garden plants. Cut flowers may last longer if chamomile infusion is added to the vase water. This herb has a long history as a calming sedative, for treating irritated, puffy eyes and as a digestive herb. An infusion was said to fade freckles if applied to skin and to lighten blond hair when used as a hair rinse.



Modern herbalists call chamomile the 'mother of the gut'. It relaxes the digestive, nervous and muscular systems. Its slight bitterness encourages bile flow and helps digestion. An infusion soothes the skin, and the mucous membranes of the respiratory and digestive systems. It can be used to treat candida, nausea, sinusitis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, sunburn and rashes.

Chamomile's anti-allergy quality is valuable for treating asthma, sinusitis, and hayfever. The infused oil, or a poultice of an infusion, can be used topically to heal wounds, ulcers and even bedsores. The oil is a valuable addition to skin creams to treat dry skin, irritating rashes, insect bites or nappy rash. Spray strong chamomile infusion onto sunburned skin to cool and soothe the area.



Habitat: Fields, paths, wasteland

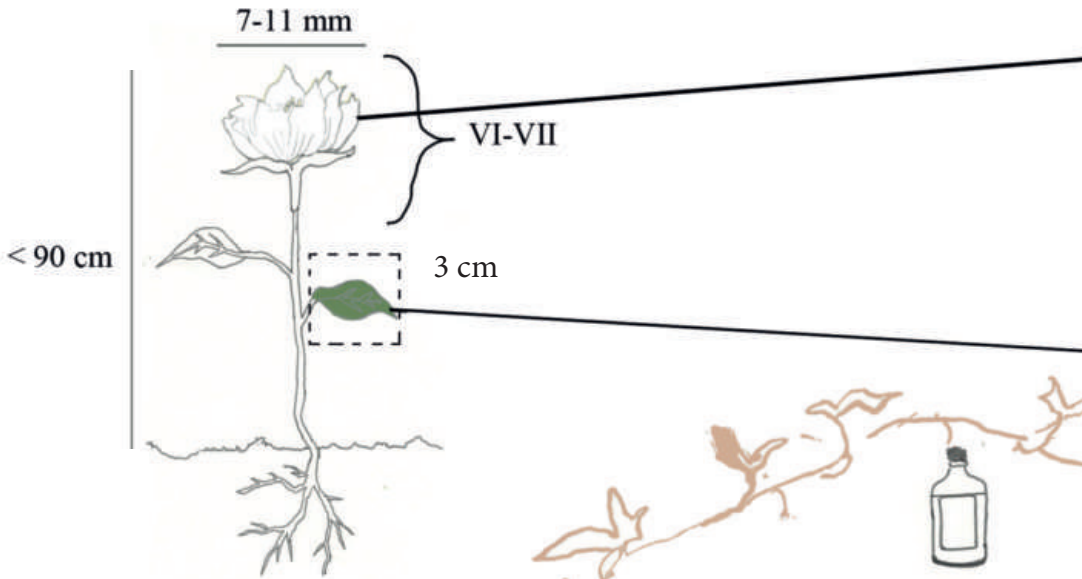


**'Bitter' herbs
may help
stimulate uterine
contractions
and should be
avoided in early
pregnancy.**

MEDICAGO SATIVA

Family: Leguminosae / Fabaceae

(L) éiwige Kléi, Geissraute; (F) luzerne; (D) Luzerne; (UK) lucerne, alfalfa



Alfalfa came to northern Europe over 3 centuries ago as a cultivar. It is an important fodder crop and nitrogen fixer, a commercial source of chlorophyll and Vitamin K1. The deep root brings up minerals from deep in the soil, makes it drought resistant and helps prevent soil erosion. Used traditionally as cattle fodder, it was said to improve the milk yield in dairy cattle and to increase the stamina of horses. In South Africa, it is traditionally used in treating diabetes.



Alfalfa's inclusion in the human diet is more recent. It contains high levels of vitamins and minerals. It also contains proteins, fats and phyto-oes-trogens. This makes it of great value in treating problems of weight loss, convalescence or anorexia. It provides support in osteoporosis, cataracts, muscle and joint pain, or sinus infection. The high chlorophyll content supports tissue healing, joint disease, abscesses and wounds. Digestion and kidney function are also stimulated and it helps to prevent high cholesterol levels.



Alfalfa leaves can be cooked as spinach or used as a garnish. The seeds can be sprouted and eaten raw or cooked.



Habitat: Farmland, wasteland, grassland, near paths

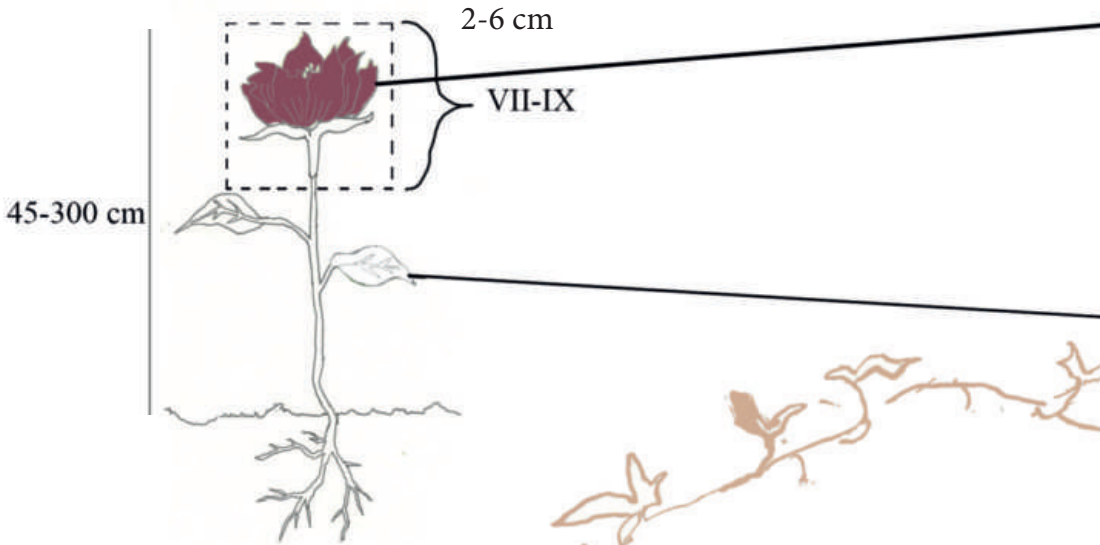


Alfalfa can negate the good effects of vitamin E if they are taken together as supplements. It may interact with anti-coagulant medication.

ONOPORDUM ACANTHIUM

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Ieselsdäschtel; (F) Chardon aux ânes; (D) Eselsdistel; **(UK) cotton thistle, scotch thistle**



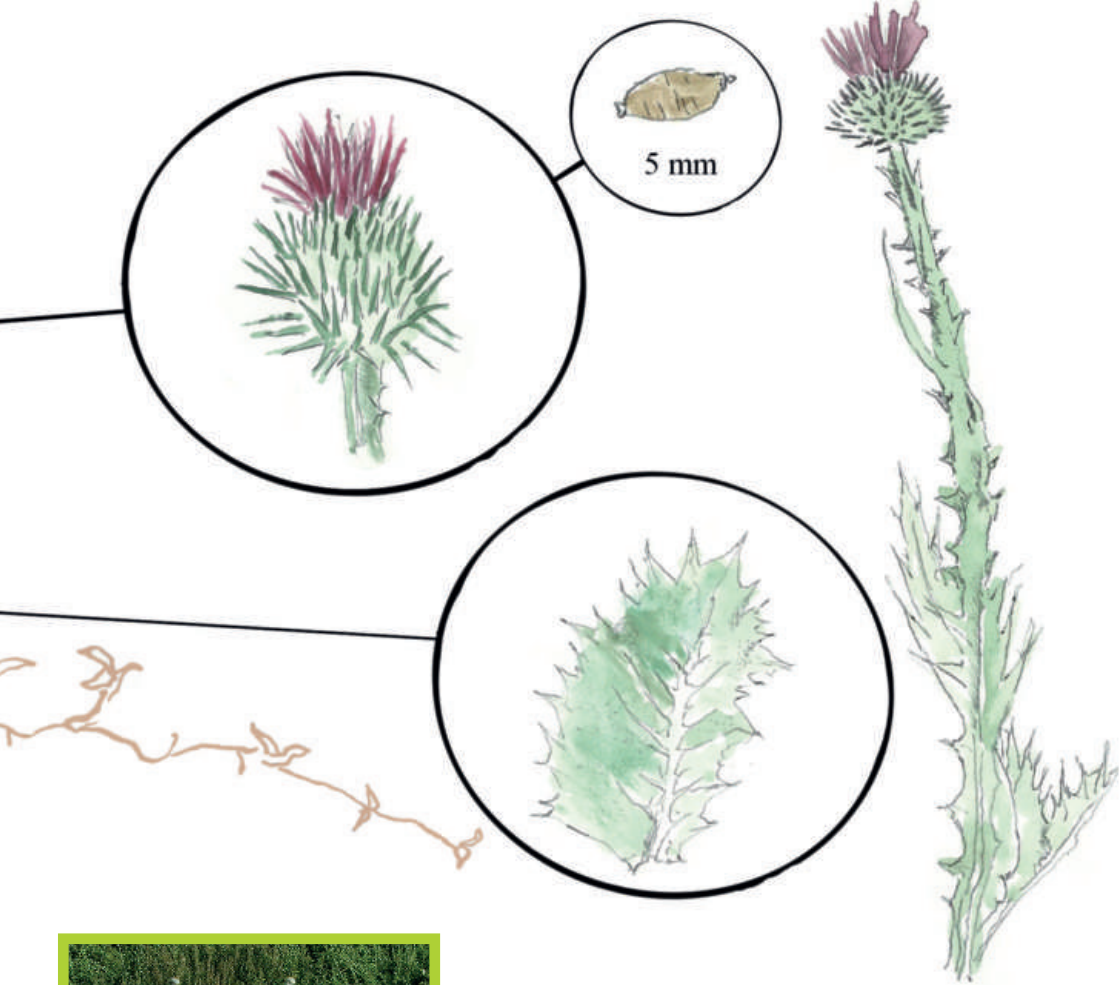
It is often called the Scotch Thistle and is the heraldic flower of Scotland. Folklore tells of thistle spikes 'stabbing' the feet of would-be attackers and thus warning the population. The fluffy 'down' of the ripe flower heads is said to have been used to stuff pillows. Oil from the fruits and seeds was used as lamp oil and for cooking. This thistle is reputed to have a use in treating damaged ligaments, rickets, nervous complaints, coughs, gall bladder complaints, and to be a cardiac tonic.



It is generally no longer used by modern herbalists.



The receptacle and young shoots can be eaten as a vegetable.

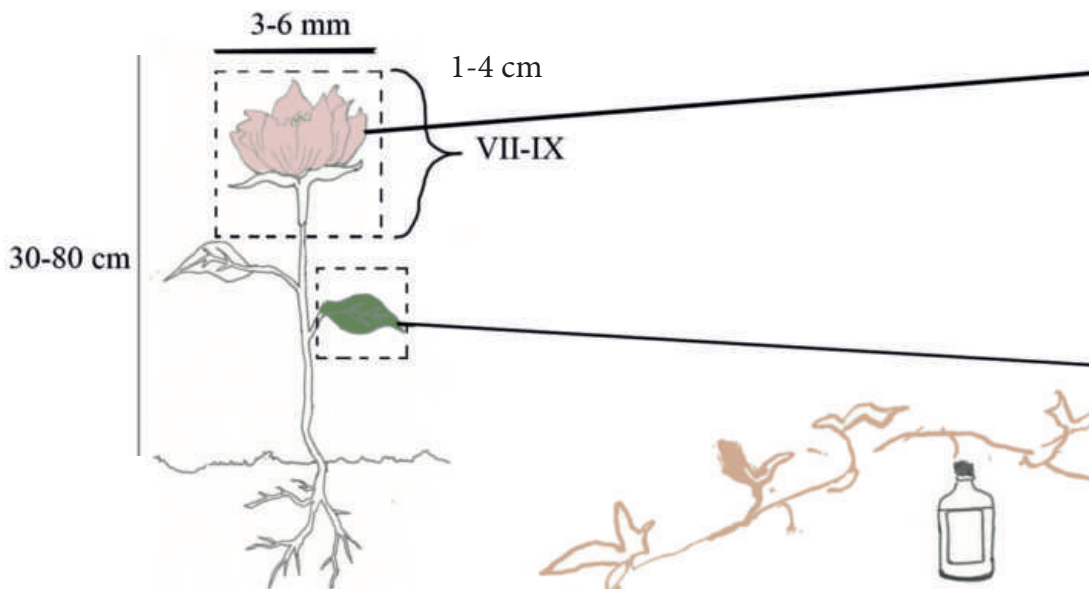


Habitat: Fields, grassland, calcareous soils

ORIGANUM VULGARE

Family: Labiatae / Lamiaceae

(L) Léiffrabettstréi; (F) origan; (D) Dost; (UK) wild marjoram, oregano



Marjoram was one of the common strewing herbs used to freshen and perfume rooms.

It was used by the ancient Greeks - the name, *Origanum*, is derived from Greek for mountain [oros] and joy [ganos] indicating the cheerful colour it gives to mountainsides. It was used to combat poisoning, convulsions and 'dropsy'. If it grew on a grave, that was considered a sign that the departed was happy.

A crown of marjoram was placed on the heads of wedding couples.

Flowering tops were used to dye woollen cloth purple or linen a reddish brown. The dyes fade quickly. They were also used to flavour beer prior to the use of hops.



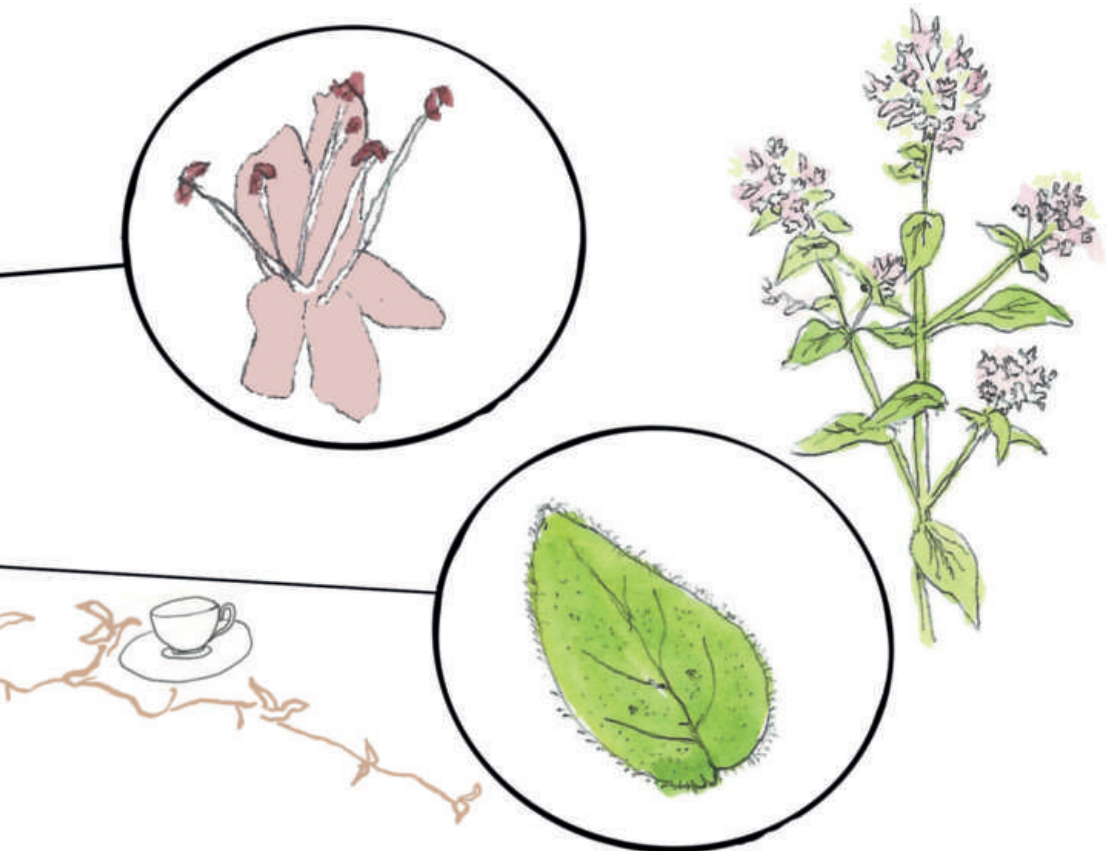
The medicinal value depends on the level of the essential oil content which requires a warm climate to develop. The oil may be seen in vesicles in the leaves - similar to those in the leaves of St John's Wort.

Origanum is used in the treatment of 'heavy' coughs, including whooping cough. It helps to reduce cough spasm and to bring up deep-seated phlegm.

External application helps the pain and stiffness of muscles and wry neck [torticollis].



The 'oregano' of Mexican cuisine is from a different species.

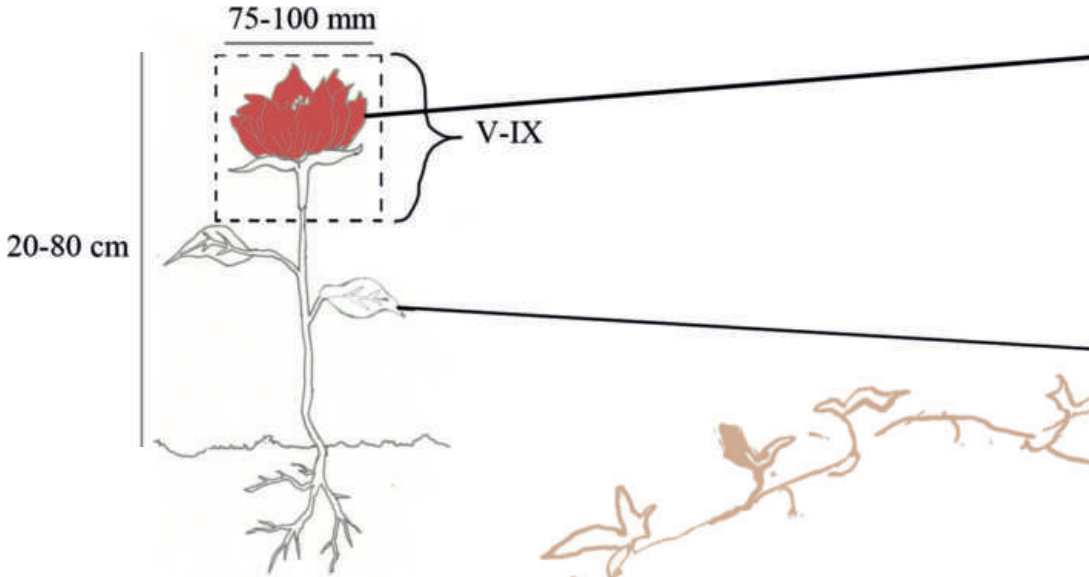


Habitat: Dry grassland, sunny woodland margins

PAPAVER RHOEAS

Family: Papaveraceae

(L) Engelsblumm, Feierblumm; (F) coquelicot ; (D) Klatschmohn, Feldmohn; (UK) field or common poppy



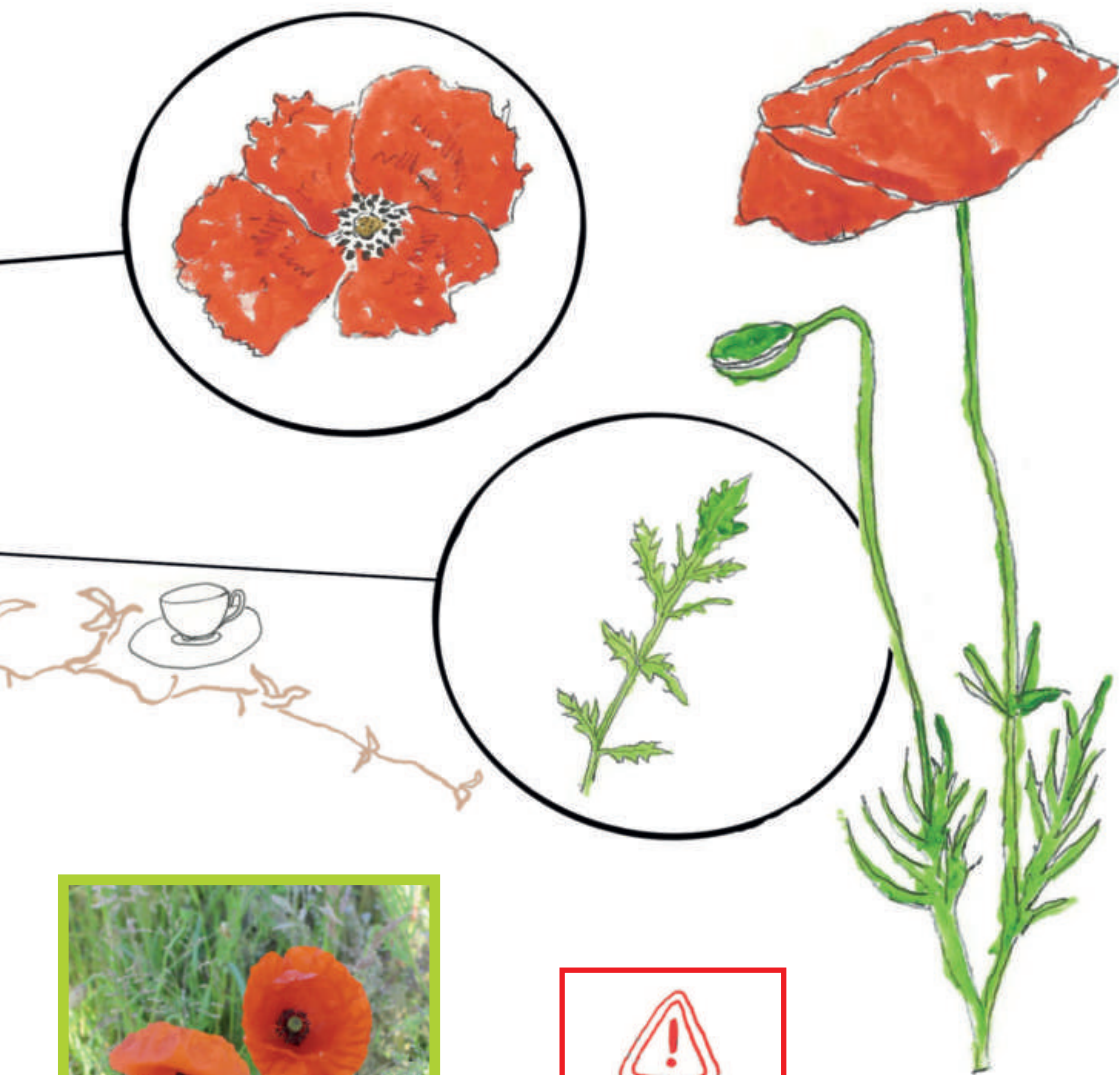
This poppy, unlike several other members of the family, does not contain morphine. The fresh petals have been used as colouring for other medication and added to cough remedies. The application of an infusion of the fresh petals is said to reduce wrinkles when applied to the skin. Traditional uses include treatment for rheumatism, colic, dry cough, bronchitis, sore throats and whooping cough. In Arabic society, the seeds were mixed with honey and taken as a sedative. A fine oil has been extracted from the seeds.



The fresh petals, which are mildly sedative, are prepared as syrup or tea for colic, nervousness, insomnia and may also help an irritable cough. Modern use of poppy preparations is similar to the old traditional uses.



The seeds can be added to bread or cakes.



Habitat: Arable land, gardens, vineyards, field margins

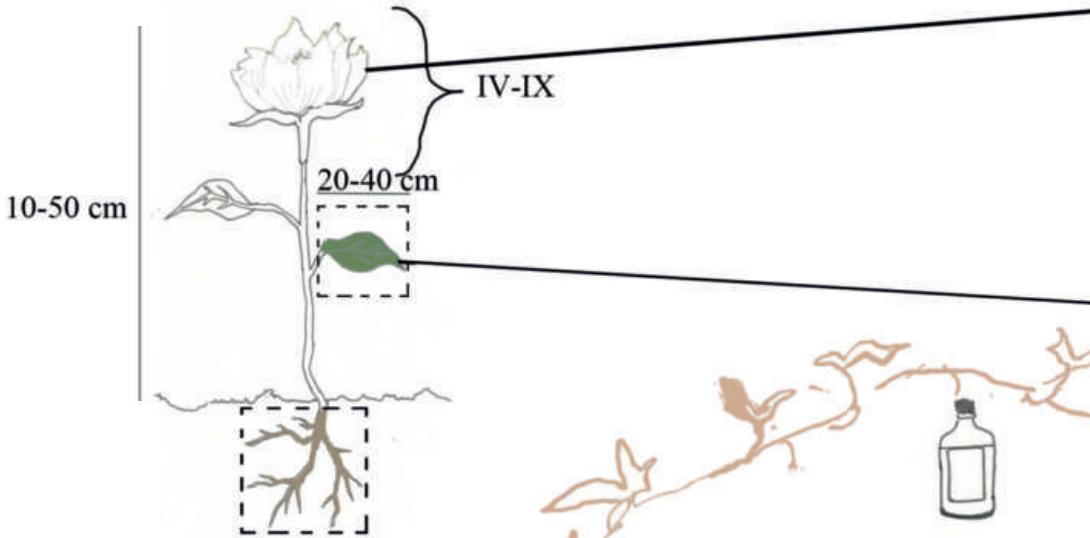


**All green parts
of this plant
are
potentially toxic.**

PLANTAGO LANCEOLATA

Family: Plantaginaceae

(L) Weebreet, Weeblat; (F) plantain; (D) Spitzwegerich, Spießkraut; **(UK) narrow-leaved plantain, ribwort plantain, waybread.**



Farmers used to twist ribwort leaf to judge humidity levels and the fire risk to hay. It was widely eaten by sheep.

Traditionally, ribwort plantain was used externally as a drawing poultice, to treat skin tumours, snake bites and insect stings. Taken internally, it was considered a 'blood cleanser' and in China it was used to treat syphilis. In France, the mucilage from the seeds was used as a fabric starch. It is said 'planta' refers to the foot and that the leaves were used to line shoes, to give some comfort on long walks.



Modern use is mainly for skin and pulmonary problems, or digestive tract conditions such as ulcers, colitis or gastroenteritis. It is a useful diuretic for gout or arthritis and contributes zinc, potassium and magnesium to the body.

The high silica content helps respiratory conditions - bronchitis, coughs, emphysema, rhinitis and even otitis media. The anti-histamine action is valued for treating allergic reactions. Other uses are for shingles and urinary infections.

The juice of the crushed leaves can relieve the irritation of insect or nettle stings.



The old name "waybread" may indicate that the plant was a food. It is not related to the banana plantain.

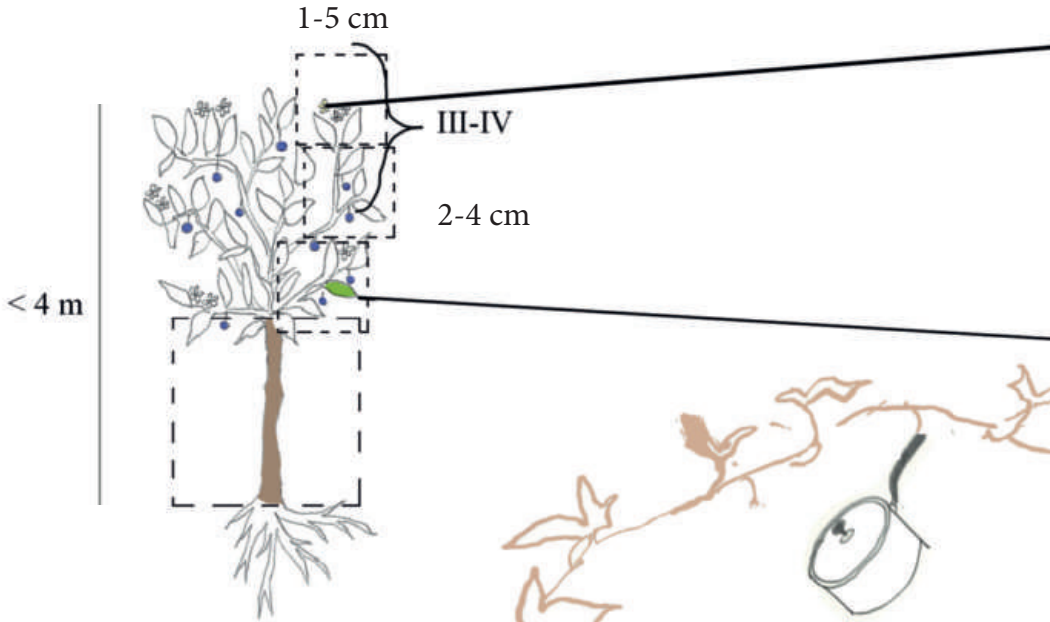


Habitat: Meadows, pastures, paths, lawns

PRUNUS SPINOSA

Family: Rosaceae

(L) Schléiwendar; (F) prunellier; (D) Schlehe, Schlehdorn; (UK) blackthorn



The sloe is the fruit of the blackthorn. When ripe, this is used in England to make sloe gin. Unripe fruit with leaves and flowers were given to acne sufferers of puberty age as a 'spring cure'. The wood was traditionally used for the teeth of hay-rakes, and for the Irish shillelagh - a club or walking stick.



The bark is extremely astringent and can be used to reduce fevers. The flowers have diuretic and cleansing properties and are useful in treating acne. The leaves are also diuretic and astringent and can be used with the flowers.



The ripe fruit is used to prepare sloe gin. The fruit is picked after the first winter frost, pricked with a thorn from the bush, sugar is added, then the berries are covered with gin. Detailed recipes are available on the internet.



10-12 mm
diam.



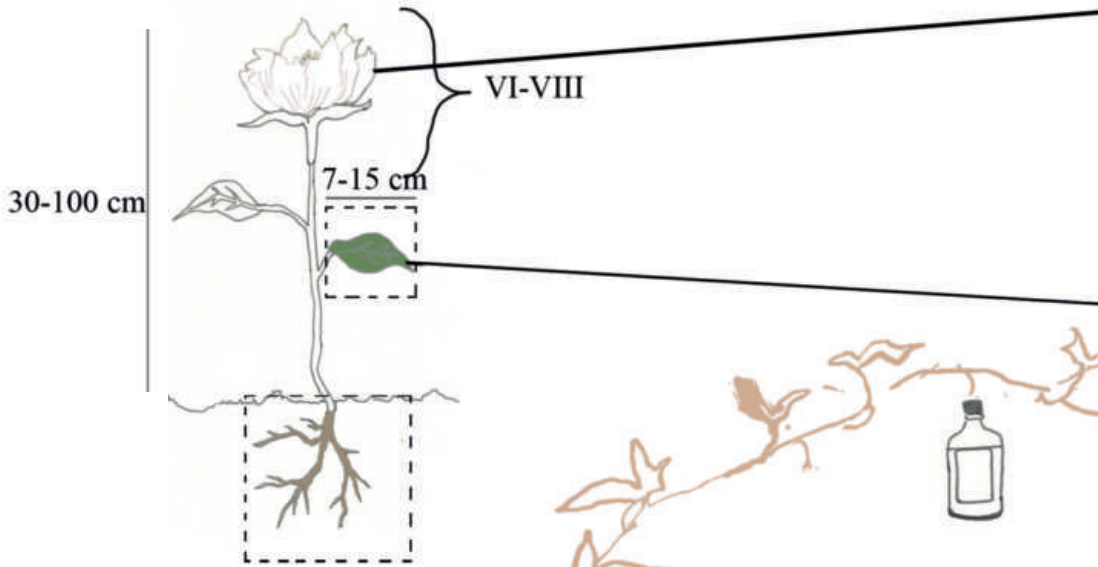
Habitat: Scrubland, hedgerows, forest margins



RUMEX ACETOSA

Family: Polygonaceae

(L) Schlangensauerampel; (F) oseille, rumex à feuilles aiguës; (D) Sauerampfer, Wiesenampfer; **(UK) common sorrel**



Sorrel was a valued addition to a spring cleansing treatment along with nettle and dandelion leaf. It was used against intestinal worms, to support the liver and the heart. Both leaves and root were used in bread-making in Scandinavia, Laplanders use the juice of the leaves to curdle milk - in place of rennet.



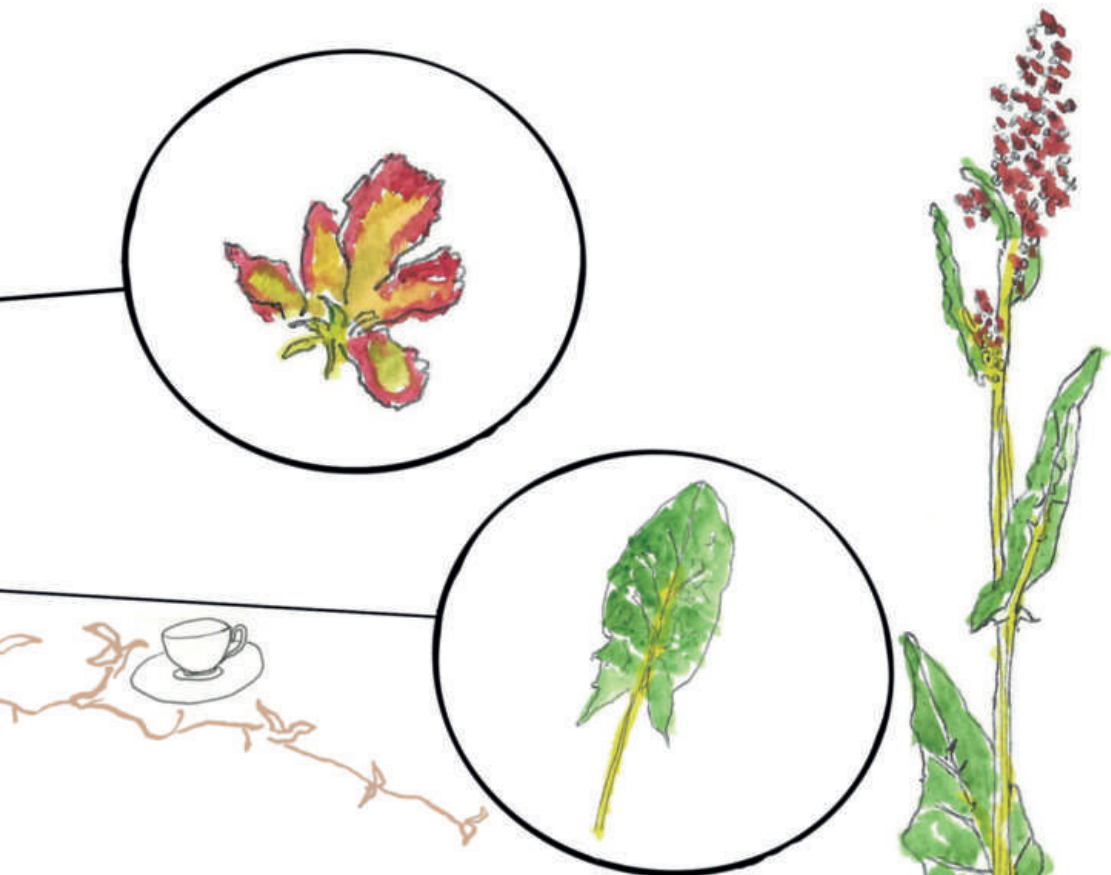
Modern use includes acne treatment, appetite stimulant and digestive aid. The high vitamin C and iron content makes sorrel suitable for treating gingivitis and scurvy. The crushed leaves can be used to ease nettle or insect stings. The root is used for gall bladder problems, liver support and constipation.



Sorrel is high in Vitamin C and iron, has diuretic and laxative actions and is frequently eaten raw as part of a 'Spring Cure'. The leaves can be eaten in salad, boiled as spinach, or added to soup, stews or egg dishes. Use them to prepare a green sauce to accompany fish, pork or goose.



This plant contains oxalates. Continued use should be avoided by anyone suffering from gout, arthritis or kidney stones. Occasional small doses as part of a 'Spring Cure' would not be harmful. Most of the oxalate content is lost if the leaves are boiled - as in preparing soup.

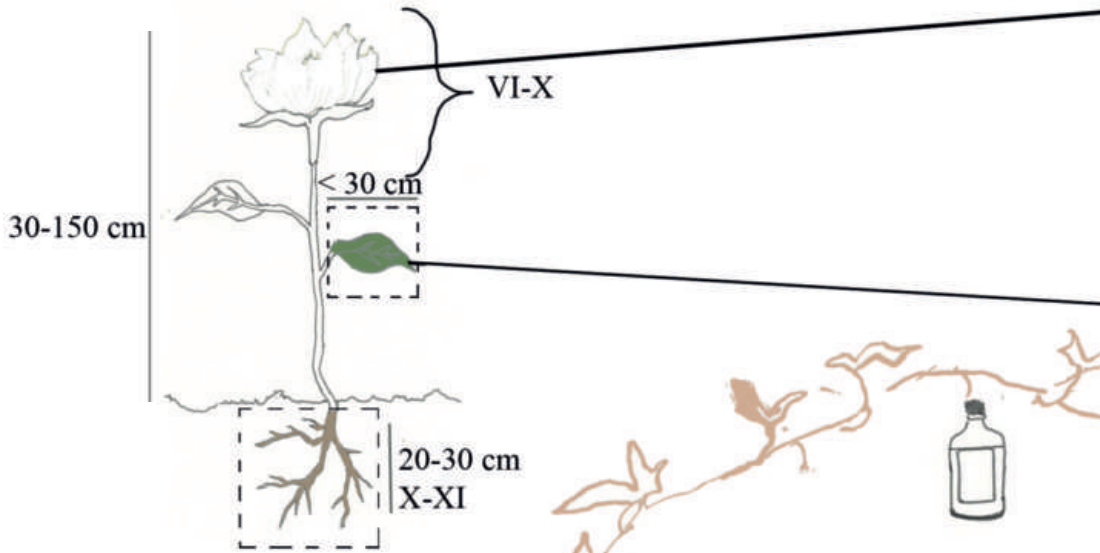


Habitat: Near paths, scrubland, hedge margins, gardens

RUMEX CRISPUS

Family: Polygonaceae

(L) Botterblatt; (F) oseille d'Amérique, oseille crépue; (D) Krauser Ampfer; **(UK) yellow dock; curled dock**



The roots absorb iron from the soil. This is then transmuted into organic iron in the plant, especially in the root. In the past, iron filings were dug into the soil around yellow dock to “enrich” the plants and the root was later used to treat iron-deficiency anaemia.

The leaves have been used as a “spring tonic” with dandelion, sorrel and nettle leaves.

The crushed leaves can be applied to soothe nettle rash.

The Luxembourgish name reflects the use of dock leaves to wrap fresh butter when taking it to market.



Yellow dock is a depurative [blood cleanser] and is used for skin problems, including chronic psoriasis, and to lift feelings of being sluggish or below par.

It improves enzyme action, gallbladder and liver function. It is useful in treating poor digestion and chronic constipation. The seeds can be taken to combat diarrhoea.

Rich in organic iron and sulphur, yellow dock may help iron-deficiency anaemia and chronic skin disorders. Iron from the plant is well absorbed by the human digestive system and does not cause constipation, as may occur with iron from other sources. The root can be used as a tooth powder against gingivitis or as a topical application against ringworm.

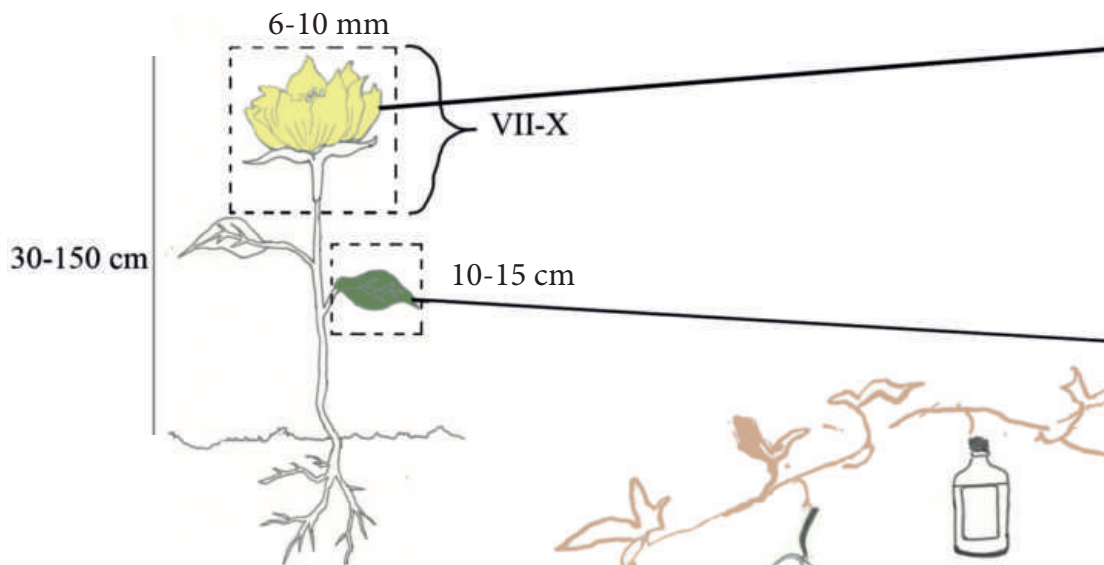


Habitat: Damp wasteland, gardens, shaded grassland

TANACETUM VULGARE

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

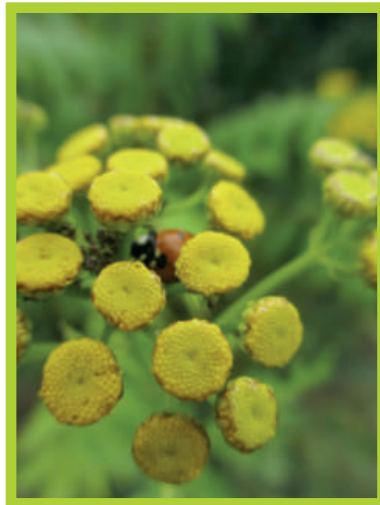
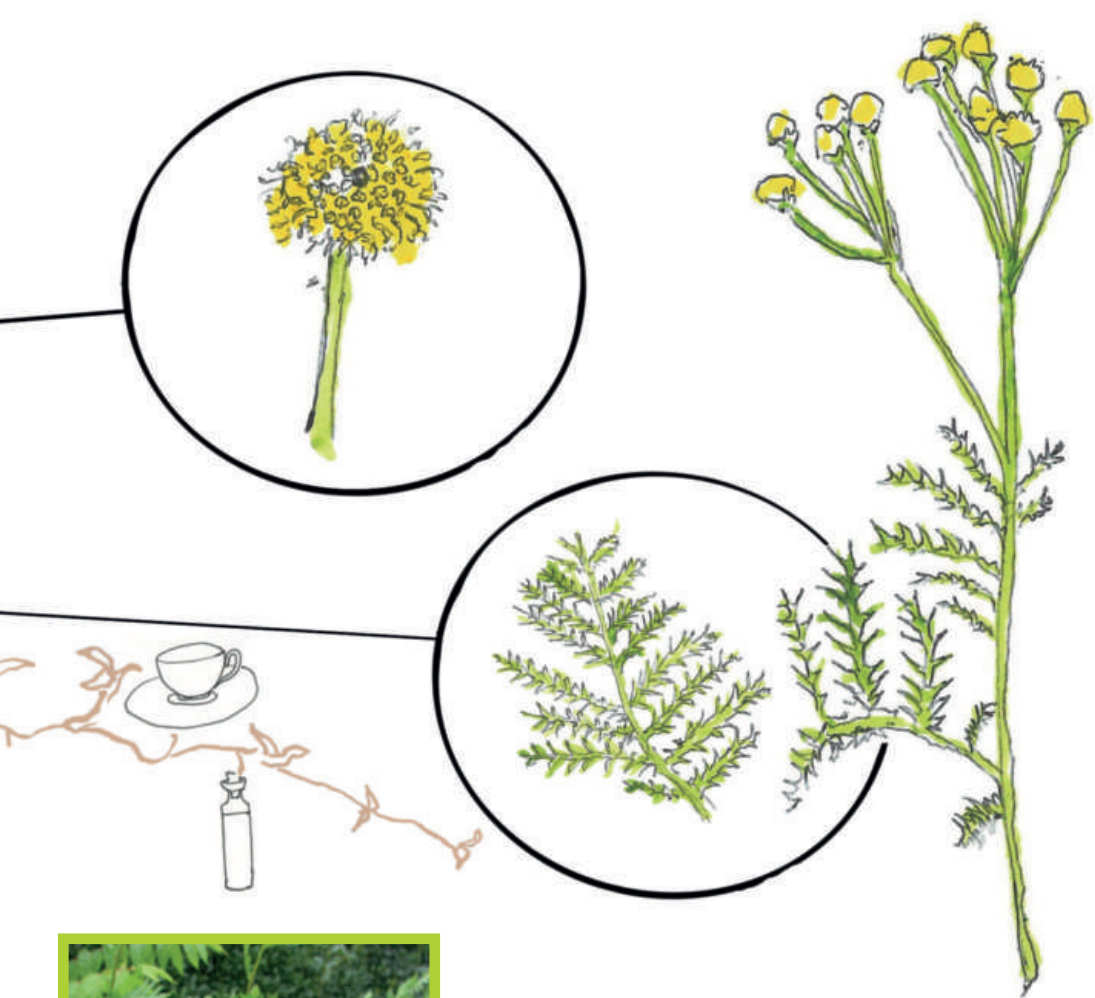
(L) Würemkraut; (F) tansie; (D) Rainfarn; (UK) tansy



Tansy leaves have some insect repellent quality, especially against flies and their larvae. Tansy was used in the Middle-ages as a 'strewing herb' on kitchen floors. It was rubbed on meat, probably as an insect deterrent and to delay decay. It is said to have been smeared on corpses to delay corruption by corpse worms.



This plant is used internally to regulate menstruation. It can also be a treatment against internal parasites, for which it can be applied as an enema. An ointment containing tansy can be used to relieve pruritus anus. Externally, this plant is a useful topical treatment against parasites including scabies, body lice and fleas. For this, use a simple decoction of the aerial parts of the plant.



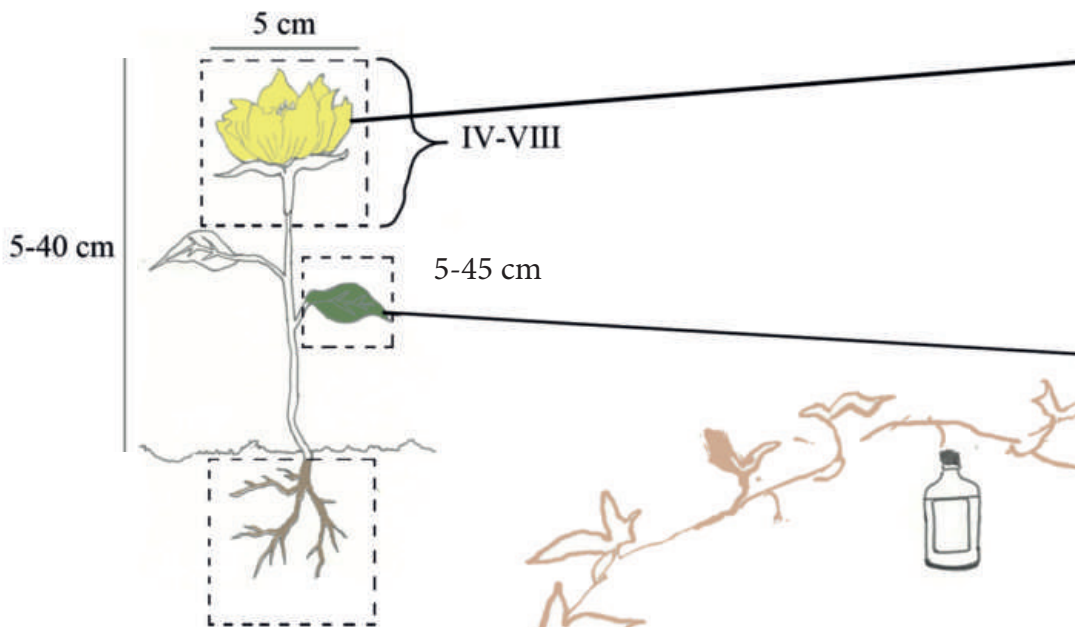
Tansy contains thujone and should be avoided in early pregnancy. Not suitable for self-medication.

Habitat: Dry, sunny wasteland. Path and road margins

TARAXACUM OFFICINALE

Family: Compositae / Asteraceae

(L) Äerblumm, Äerstack; (F) dent-de-lion, pissenlit; (D) Löwenzahn; (UK) dandelion



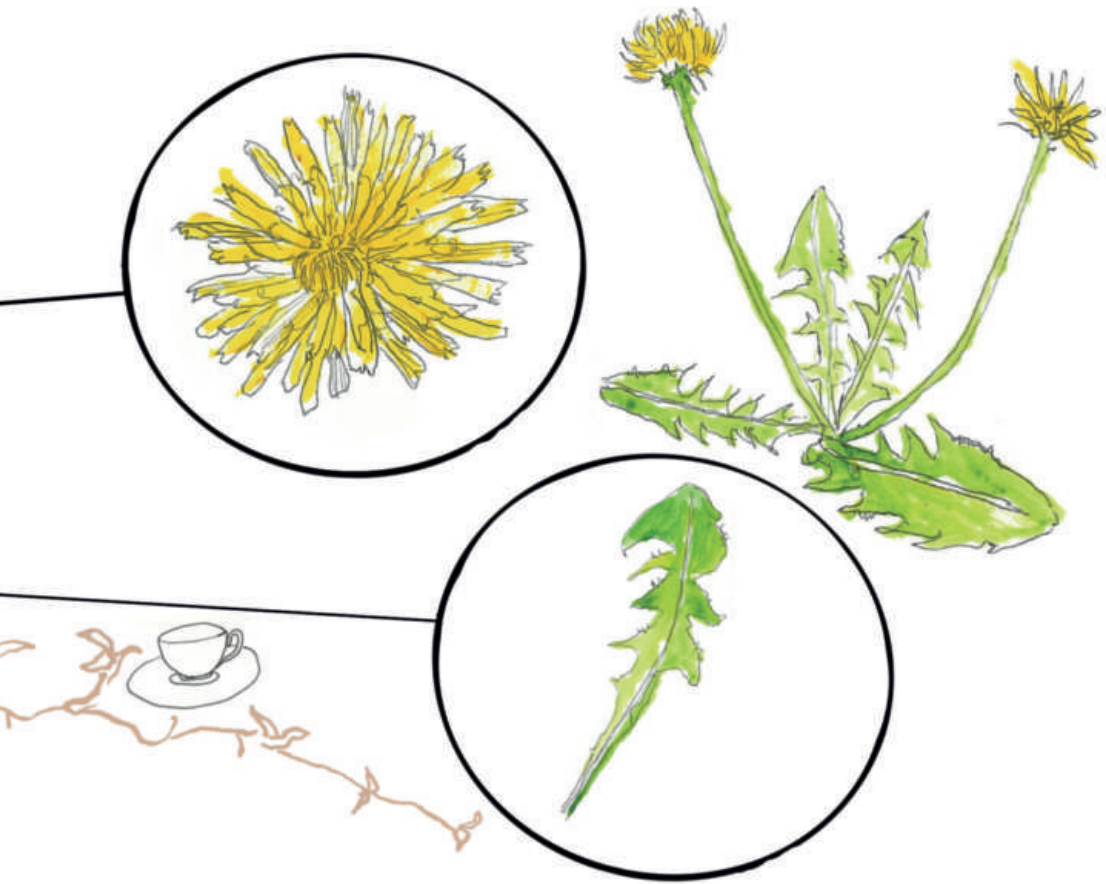
Mineral and vitamin rich - potassium, boron, calcium, silica, vitamins A, B & C - dandelion is said to contain more Vitamin A than carrots. The flowers contain lecithin. Traditionally, it was an important salad-herb and part of a 'spring cure' with nettle, yellow dock and plantain. Dandelion florets were made into wine. The leaves were added to beer. In the Middle Ages, it was used to treat eye conditions. The chopped root has been dried and roasted as a coffee substitute. Dandelion was used to treat conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, gout, haemorrhoids and skin conditions.



The roots and leaves are diuretic, aid digestion and stimulate kidney and liver function, which in turn improve skin conditions. Dandelion can improve gall bladder function and reduce gallstones. It can stimulate appetite, especially in convalescent and elderly patients. It is safe to use in cases of nausea, even in pregnancy. The latex of the flower stalk can be applied to remove warts, but this requires persistent application.



Use the leaves in salads, sandwiches, cooked like spinach, or added to soups. Unopened flowers can be lightly fried in butter and eaten with scrambled egg.



Habitat: Meadows, fields, wasteland

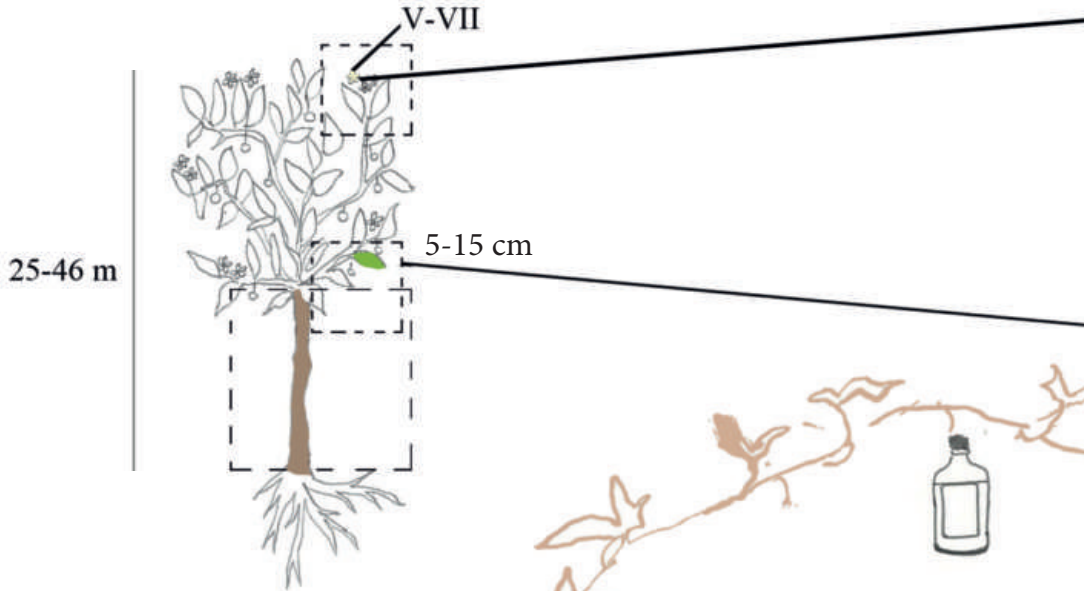


The flower latex may cause blistering. Avoid putting flower stalks near mouth or eyes.

TILIA X EUROPEA (SYN. TILIA X VULGARIS)

Family: Tiliaceae

(L) Lann, Lannebam; (F) tilleul de Hollande; (D) Holländische Linde; **(UK) Dutch lime**



The largest lime trees can grow to nearly 50 metres, making them the tallest non-coniferous species in Northern Europe. The heart-shaped leaves were seen by exponents of the Doctrine of Signatures to signify that this tree could be used to treat heart complaints.



The flowers of the lime are greatly valued by modern herbalists. They are effective in treating hypertension, arteriosclerosis, nervousness, tension headaches and poor sleep. Children can also take lime flower - especially along with elder - for respiratory illness and to stimulate sweating in feverish conditions.



The young, fresh leaves of the lime can be eaten.

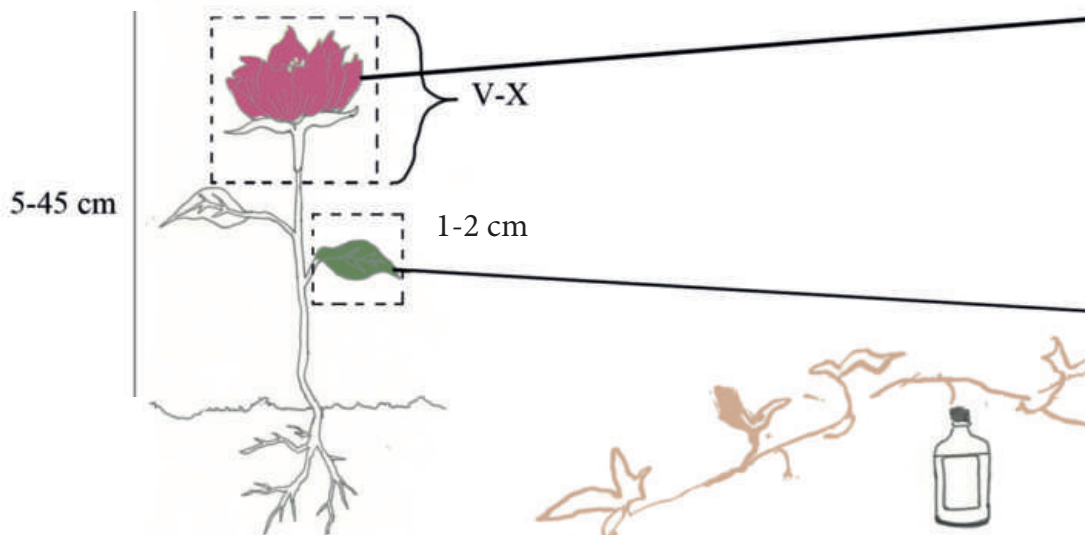


Habitat: Sunny, well-drained soil

TRIFOLIUM PRAETENSE

Family: Leguminosae / Fabaceae

(L) dräijärege Kléi, roude Kléi; (F) triolet, trèfle des prés; (D) Wiesenklee, Rotklee; (UK) red clover



Red clover was used by physicians of the Ancient World, and early migrants took it to the New World. It is the official state flower of Vermont.

As a charm against malevolence, it was believed to ward off evil forces.

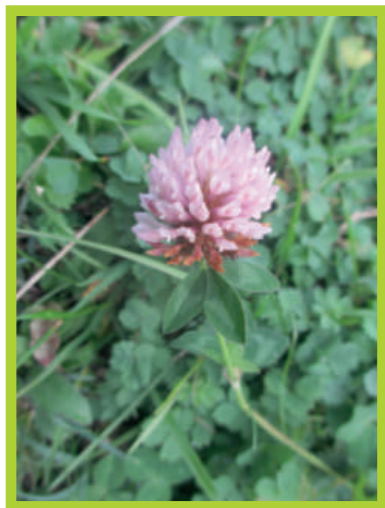
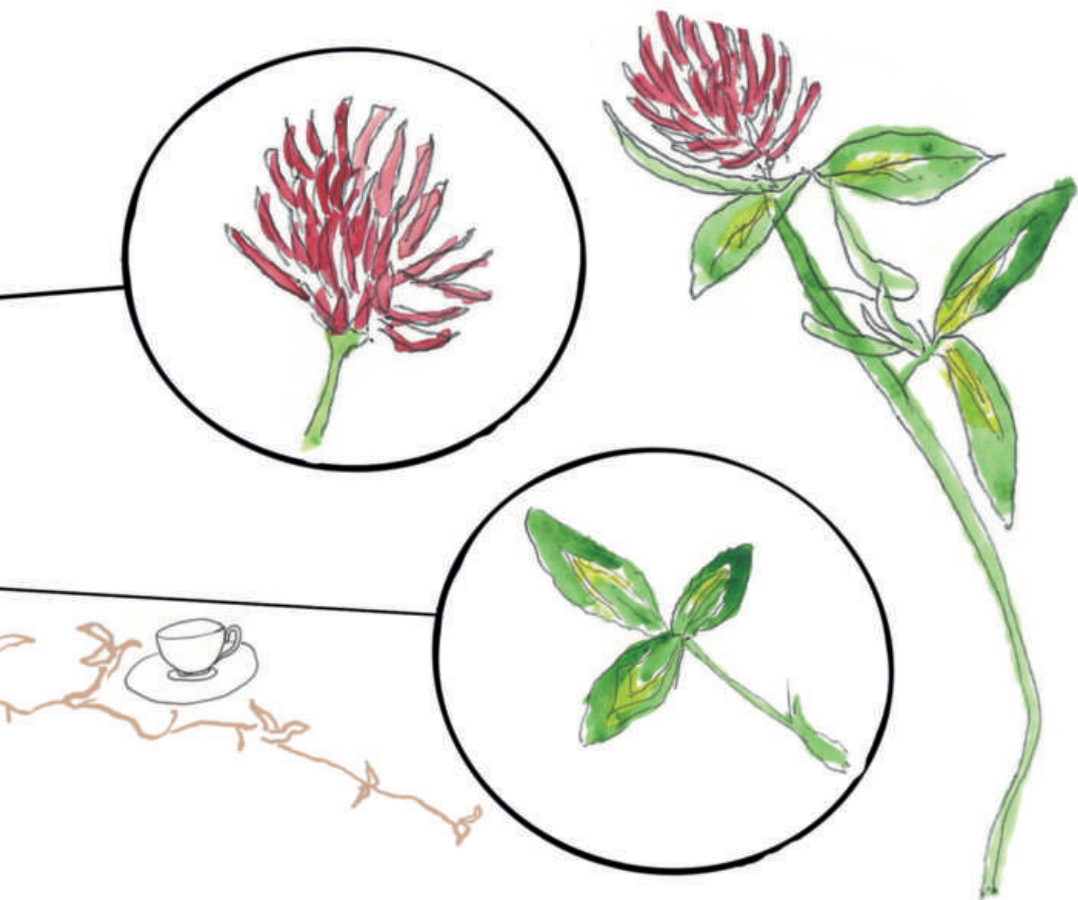
In ancient medicine, red clover was used to treat wounds and inflamed skin, and as a mouthwash for inflamed or bleeding gums. It has been used for respiratory and skin complaints including TB, asthma, whooping cough, dermatitis and psoriasis.

All clovers are important agricultural and fodder crops; nitrogen-fixers enriching the soil for other plants.



Red clover has been important in Anglo-American herbal medicine for over 200 years. The flower heads are used to treat chronic skin complaints. Their expectorant action is of great value for respiratory conditions. It is used as a mouthwash for mouth infections and mouth ulcers, and as a gargle for sore throats.

The leaves are reputed to have a phyto-oestrogenic action and may be used for menopausal complaints. This plant also contains chemicals which have demonstrated action against tumour growth so it may have a place in cancer management. Red clover is an ingredient in Essiac tea.

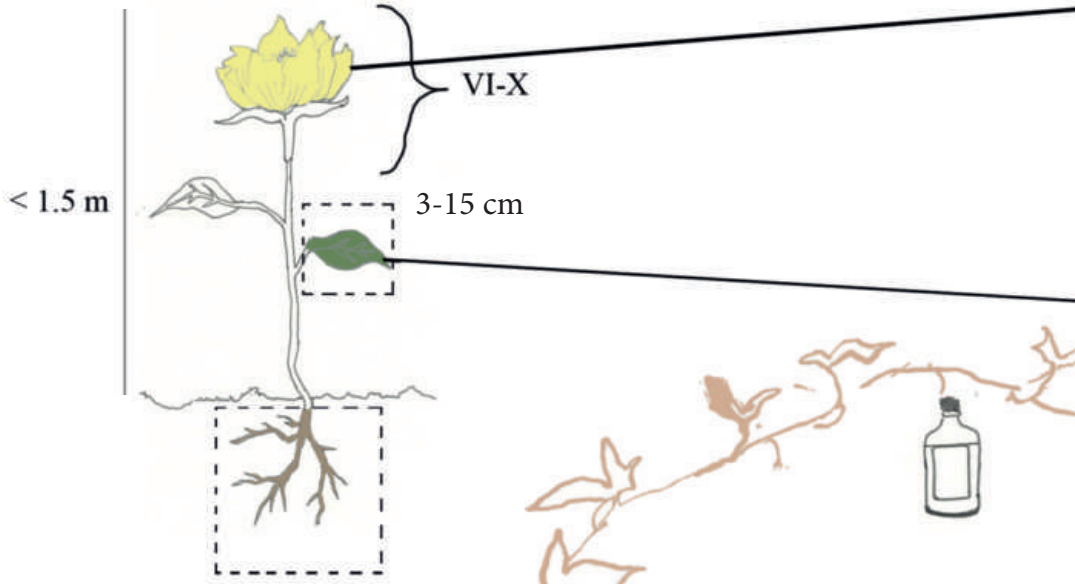


Habitat: Grassy banks, road margins, meadows

URTICA DIOICA

Family: Urticaceae

(L) Brennessel, Bréineestel; (F) ortie dioique; (D) Große Brennessel; (UK) **common nettle, stinging nettle**



Bronze-Age sites have revealed sheets woven from the fibrous stems of nettles - reputedly finer than linen.

Nettle is an ancient food-plant - added to soup and beer, fed to domestic animals to improve the laying of hens, the meat quality of pigs and turkey, and the shine on horses' coats.

Nettle tea hair rinse was believed to stimulate hair growth.

Gardeners soak nettles in water and use the liquid as an insecticide and a fertiliser. The plant can be used directly as a nutritious mulch on gardens. Moth and butterfly caterpillars, e.g. tortrix and peacock, eat the leaves, while other larvae survive over winter in the roots.



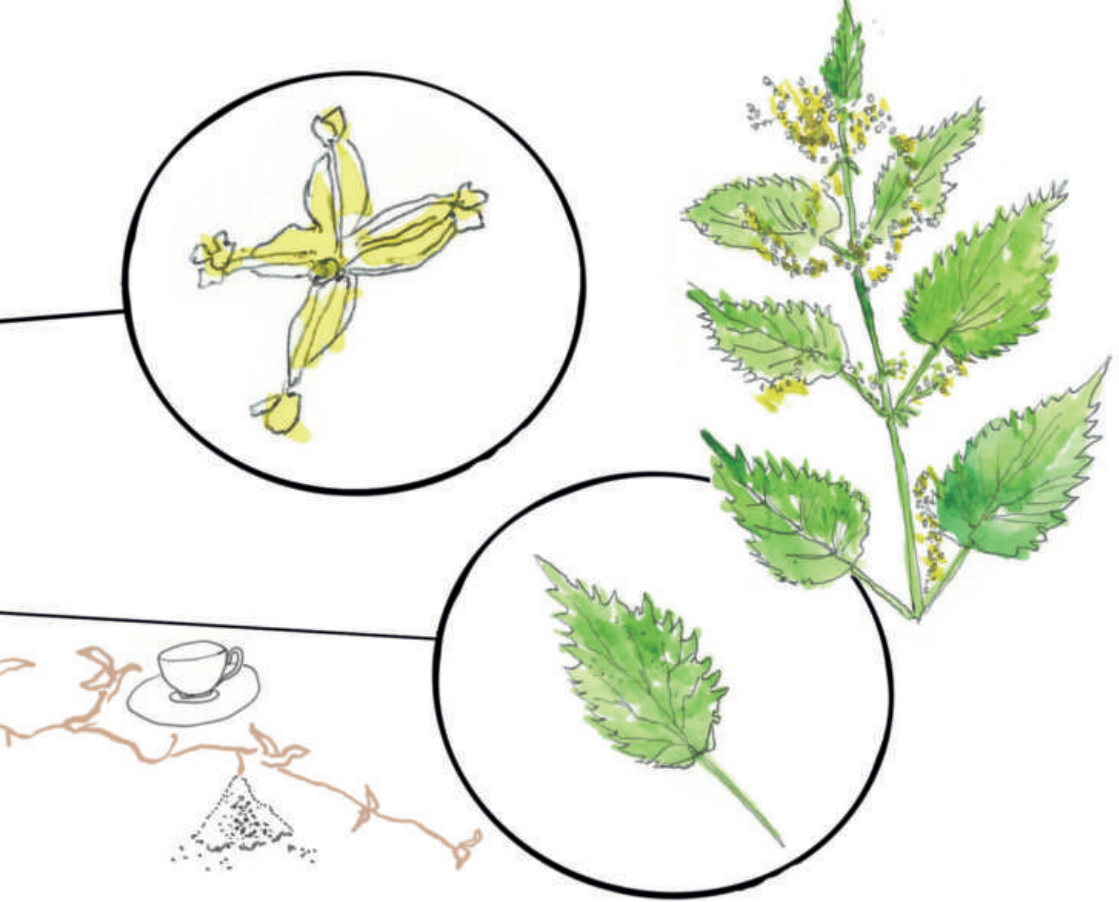
Nettle is used to treat hypersensitivity conditions. As a diuretic, it is useful in arthritis and gout.

The high vitamin and mineral content make it a valuable ingredient of a 'spring cure'. The high iron content helps in treating simple anaemia. Nettle is used to treat diarrhoea, enteritis and colic, to balance milk flow in nursing mothers, lower blood pressure, balance blood sugar and support the immune system.

Nettle root may be part of a treatment for benign enlargement of the prostate gland.



The little 'strings' of seeds can be eaten raw. Young leaves can be added to soups or stews, or cooked as a vegetable like spinach.

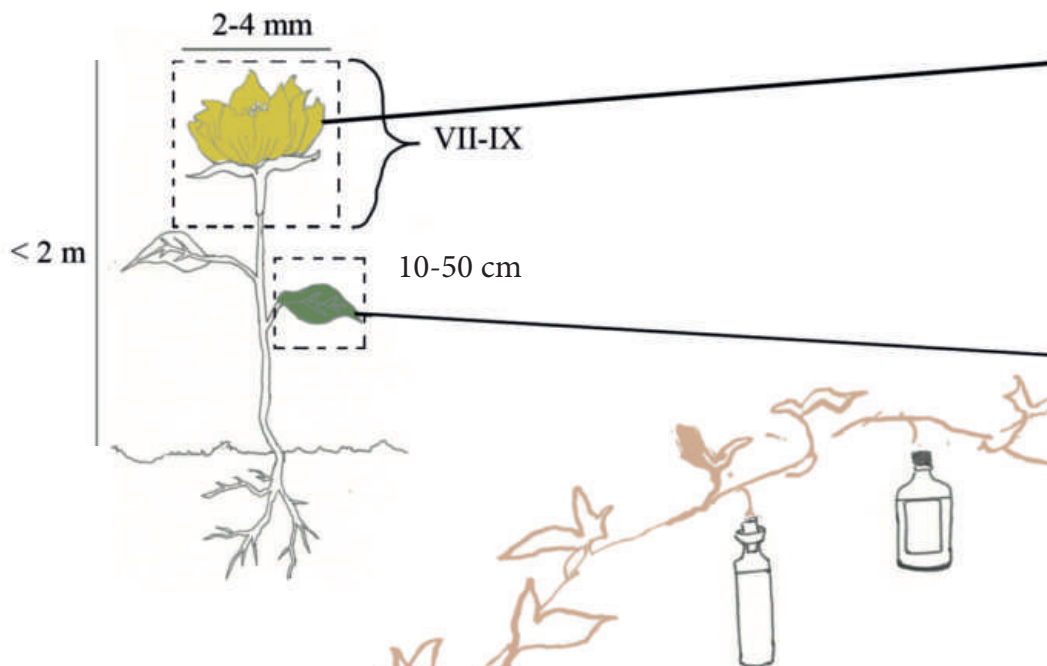


Habitat: Paths, wasteland, cleared land

VERBASCUM THAPSUS

Family: Scrophulariaceae

(L) Kierzeblumm; (F) molène, bouillon blanc; (D) Wollblume, Königskerze; **(UK) mullein, grand mullein, candle-wick plant, flannel-leaf**



Mullein provides one of the oldest remedies for bronchial conditions, including coughs, asthma and emphysema, going back over 2,000 years.

The Romans used the large thick, woolly leaves as candles by dipping them in wax. Later, the fine hairs from the leaves were used in the production of candle wicks. The leaves are said to be useful in lining shoes for insulation and warmth.

The flowers were used cosmetically to improve hair while the leaf was a drawing agent in removing splinters. They have also been used to create yellow or green dyes; even hair dyes.

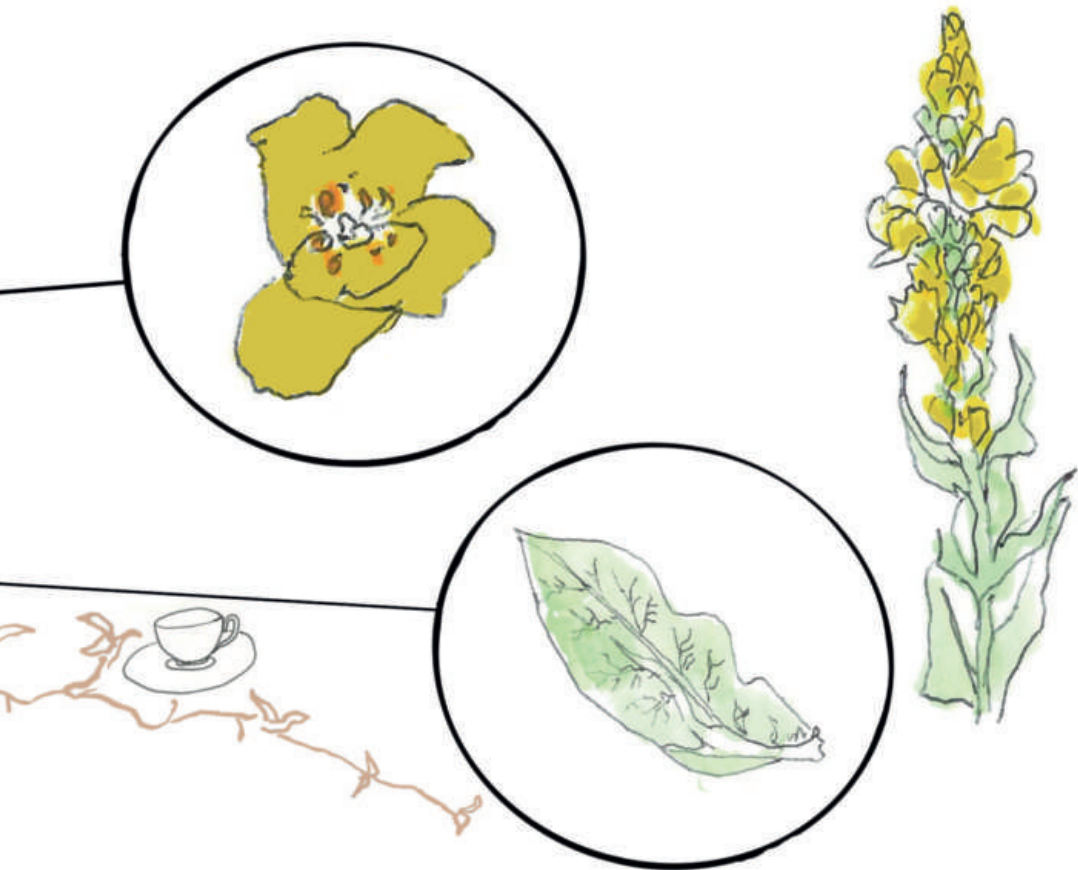
The seeds, said to be sedative, were used by fishermen to help catch fish.

In Ireland, a handful of mullein leaf was boiled in about 1 litre of milk. This was strained and drunk to treat respiratory complaints. This use also reflects the French name for this herb.



Mullein is valued as a treatment for respiratory conditions, painful or productive coughs and middle ear infections. An infusion must be strained through a fine filter to remove the irritating small hairs.

Externally, the flowers are macerated in olive oil and used to treat earache, inflamed skin, chilblains, haemorrhoids and as a chest rub.



Habitat: Woodland margins, dry, stony land, hedgerows

MAKING A HERBAL INFUSION

- 1) Put a rounded teaspoonful of dried herb* into a teacup, teaball or tea filter bag.
- 2) Fill the teacup with boiling water.
- 3) Cover and leave to stand for 5-10mins.
- 4) Remove the teaball or tea filter.
- 5) Drink slowly and enjoy.

For a larger quantity, use 1 tablespoonful of dried herb to 500ml boiling water and prepare in a teapot. The infusion can then be strained into a thermos flask and drunk throughout the day.

*Double the quantity if using fresh herbs which have a higher natural water content.

MAKING HERBAL INFUSED OILS

NOTE: these are NOT essential oils.

REQUIRED:

- 1) A jar with tight fitting lid
- 2) Carrier oil - olive oil, sunflower oil, sweet almond oil
- 3) Sunny windowsill
- 4) Sieve
- 5) Coffee filter
- 6) 2nd jar with tight fitting lid

This is suitable for an infused oil of herbs such as St John's Wort, Daisy, Chamomile, Plantain, Mullein, or any plant whose **external** use has skin or wound healing properties.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Collect enough flowers or leaves (according to the plant) to fill the first jar firmly. Let leaves wilt overnight to get rid of some of the water content. Large leaves can be chopped roughly first.
- 2) Cover the plant material with the oil; with 1-2cm of oil above the plant material.
- 3) Tap the jar to get rid of air bubbles and top up the oil level if necessary.
- 4) Screw the lid on tightly.
- 5) Label the jar with the date, the plant name, the oil used
- 6) Place the jar on a sunny windowsill, turn it round once daily to vary the 'sunny side', and leave for 4-6 weeks. The time depends on the strength of sunlight to which the plant material is exposed.
- 7) Carefully unscrew the lid and pour the contents slowly into a sieve over a wide-necked jug or a bowl. Press the plant material in the sieve with the back of a spoon to squeeze out as much oil as possible.
- 8) Proceed to a second filtering by pouring the oil from "7" through a coffee filter or very fine muslin cloth, into the second jar. Screw the lid on tightly. If, after a few days, a 'scum' settles on the bottom of the jar, filter again slowly and carefully with a fresh coffee filter paper or muslin. This may be necessary when flowers are used as the pollen is very fine.
- 9) Label the jar with the name of the plant, the carrier oil and the date of production.
- 10) Oils should be stored in the fridge and will maintain their healing properties for about a year.

An alternative to step 6) is to warm the jar containing oil and plant material in water in a bain-marie for several hours. The heat should be low to avoid spoiling the natural material.

Both these methods will also work with dried herbs bought from the pharmacy but be sure to get the correct plant part e.g. St John's Wort requires a high flower content as the leaves and stems do not contain enough of the required chemical.

MAKING HERBAL HONEY

REQUIRED:

- 1) A jar of honey of your choice
- 2) A heaped tablespoon of the herb of your choice, roughly chopped

METHOD:

- 1) Pour the honey into a medium-sized bowl – about 1 litre size
- 2) Place the bowl over a pot of warm water – bain-marie method
- 3) Add the chopped herbs to the honey
- 4) Do not let the honey become too hot, just warm
- 5) Leave the mix on a very low heat for 1-2 hours to allow the properties of the herb to infuse into the honey
- 6) Remove from the heat and pour the honey & herb mix through a sieve back into the jar
- 7) Leave the herbal honey to cool and use it on bread, in tea or warm milk.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

Lavender – relaxing

Sage – sore throat

Thyme – cold or cough

Rosemary – headache, anxiety, concentration & memory, low mood

Ginger, chopped root – digestion, nausea, help blood circulation for cold hands or feet

Cinnamon, broken pieces of cinnamon bark – digestion, colic, to relieve nausea, improve blood sugar levels

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