

Common Name: **Ivy**

Genus: *Hedera*

Species: *helix*

Family: Araliaceae

AKA: Creeping Ivy, Barren Ivy



Historical Uses:

Medical: “Like a weed it is useless to eat but let a person who has jaundice heat it in a small dish with deer tallow or old fat. Place it warm over the stomach and jaundice transfers into the herb so the yellow will appear outwardly on the skin. When the herbs have been placed over the stomach, let the person immediately crush watercress in cold water, strain it through a piece of cloth; the jaundice will be expelled and the person cured.”(1)

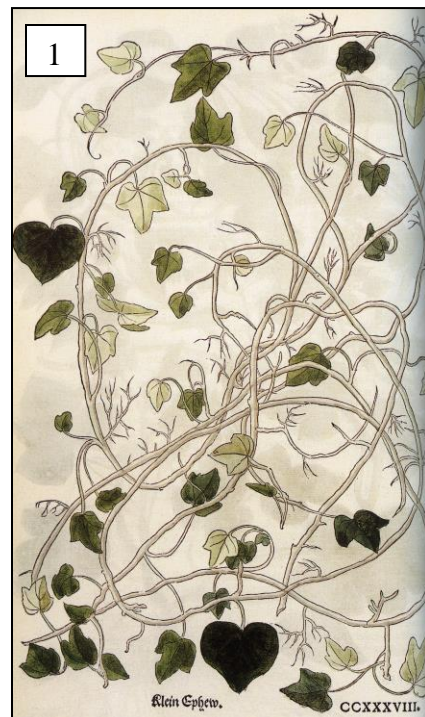
“For dropsy, take twenty seeds of this plant, crush them in a jug of wine. Give three cups of this wine to drink for seven days; the disease will be expelled through the urine.”(2)

“The juice of the berries or leaves snuffed up into the nose, purgeth the head and brain of thin rheum that maketh defluctions into the eyes and nose, and cureth the ulcers and stench therein; the same dropped into the ears, helpeth the old and running sores.”(3)

“The gum that is found upon the trunk or body of old stocke of ivy, killeth nits and lice, and taketh away haire: it is of so hot a qualitie; as that it doth obscurely burne: it is as it were a certaine waterith liquor congealed of those gummie drops. Thus farre *Galen*.”(4)

Folklore/Astrology: It is a plant of Saturn. Because it clings it is emblematic of love and fidelity. To dream of it portends friendship, happiness, good fortune, honor, wealth and success. **Bacchus** was abandoned beneath an ivy vine by his mother, **Semele**.(5-1) It is more cold than warm.(6)

Other: Priests of **Jupiter** touched ivy in order to avoid intoxication and to obtain prophetic powers. Crowns of ivy were given to poets and conquerors, for it helped the wearer to discern witches.(7) This plant is called *cryocantes* because it bears seeds that



are like gold.(8-)* (the Golden Ivy of Virgil is supposed to be the yellow-berried variety, *Hedera Chrysocarpa*, which is a fairly rare plant)(9)

The Greek priests presented a wreath of Ivy to newly-married persons, and the Ivy has throughout the ages been regarded as the emblem of fidelity. The custom of decorating houses and churches with Ivy at Christmas was forbidden by one of the early Councils of the Church, on account of its pagan associations.(10)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves

Medicinal: “A bitter, aromatic, anti-bacterial herb with a nauseating taste. It lowers fever, relaxes spasms, is an expectorant, and constricts veins. Used internally for gout, rheumatic pain, whooping cough, and bronchitis. Excess destroys red blood cells and causes irritability, diarrhea, and vomiting. Used externally for burns, warts, impetigo, scabies, skin eruptions, swollen tissues, painful joints, neuralgia, toothache and cellulitis.”(11)

Cautions: “For use by qualified practitioners only. All parts, especially young leaves and berries, are harmful if eaten. Severe skin irritant and allergen.”(12)

Area of Origin: Europe, north and central Asia

Physical description: Self-clinging, evergreen climbing or carpet forming.

Plant type: Perennial

Height: Can climb to excess of 100 ft.

Flower color: Small yellow-green

Flowering period:

Soil type/requirements: Most soils except water saturated.

Fruit: Black berry

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-9

Sun requirements: Can tolerate heavy shade

Propagation: By separation of rooted sections

Sources

1. Von Bingen, p. 129-130
2. Van Arsdall, p.201
3. Culpepper, p. 81
4. Gerard, p. 857-858
5. Anderson, p.141-142
6. Von Bingen, p. 129-130
7. Anderson, p.141-142
8. Van Arsdall, p.201
9. Grieve, pg. 440-442
10. Ibid,
11. Bown, pg. 231.

12. Ibid.

Illustrations:

1. Fuch's Herbal 1543