

Common Name: **Madder**

Genus: *Rubia*

Species: *tinctorum*

Family: Rubiaceae

AKA: Lyvwort, Ostriago, Dyer's Madder, Krapp, Robbia



## Historical Uses:

**Medical:** “For aching or broken legs, take this plant and pound it, and lay it on the leg. In three days, the place on which the poultice was laid will be much better. For all the soreness that afflicts people, take the plant we call *ostriago*, pound it and lay it on the sore. As we said earlier, it will completely heal every painful thing that develops.” (1)

“Let one that has a fever and cannot eat moderately cook madder in water, then remove the herb from the water, and then drink the water in the morning and at night. Also let them put the same herb cooked in water warm over the stomach for a short time. Let them do this for three days and the fever will end.” (2)

“It hath an opening quality, and afterwards to bind and strengthen. It is a sure remedy for yellow jaundice, by opening the obstructions of the liver and gall, and cleansing those parts. It openeth also the obstructions of the spleen, and diminisheth the melancholy humour. It is available for the palsy and sciatica, and effectual for bruises inward and outward, and is therefore much used in vulnerary drinks.” (3)

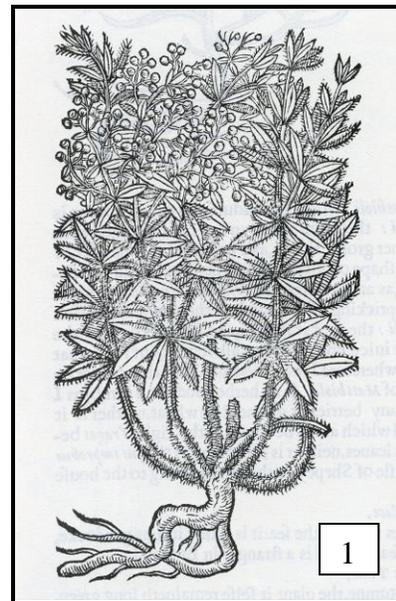
**Household:** “Roots used to dye cotton, wool and carpet materials. Depending on the mordant used it can produce several colors including rose, golden yellow, violet, blue violet, red violet, red lilac, purple, orange, brown, and black. Dyestuff also used in cosmetics and artists pigments.” (4)

**Folklore/Astrology:** Ruled by Mars. Warm and dry in the second degree. (5)

## Contemporary Uses:

**Parts Used:** Roots

**Medicinal:** “An antiseptic, diuretic, laxative herb that stimulates the liver and uterus, and relaxes spasms. Used internally for kidney and bladder stones. Used in N. African folk





medicine for anemia and blood diseases, and as an aphrodisiac: also as a tonic, appetizer and expectorant. Externally for wounds, ulcers, and sciatica.” (6)

**Economic:** Dried roots are used as a source for various colors of dye and for ink. (7)

**Other:** Plant has been used to polish metal work. Sometimes used as fodder for animals. (8)

**Caution:** If taken internally madder stains bone, milk and urine.

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**Area of Origin:** Southern Europe, Mediterranean region, western Asia

**Physical description:** Climber

**Plant type:** Perennial

**Height:** 10”-36”

**Flower color:** Tiny pale yellow-green to cream colored flowers

**Flowering period:** Summer to autumn

**Soil type/requirements:** Well-drained soil

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 6-10

**Sun requirements:** Sun or partial shade

**Propagation:** By seed. By division in spring.

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**Sources:**

1. Van Arsdall, p. 162, 173
2. Von Bingen, p.142-143
3. Culpeper, p. 89
4. Anderson, p. 276
5. Ibid.
6. Bown, p. 350
7. Ibid
8. Grieve, p. 504-505

**Illustrations/Images:**

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| 1. Gerard’s Herbal | 1633 |
| 2. PSUMG           | 2006 |
| 3. PSUMG           | 2006 |



Close-up of the leaves and stems. Note the small barbs along the stem line.