

Common Name: **Motherwort**

Genus: *Leonurus*

Species: *cardiaca*

Family: Lamiaceae

AKA: Motherwoort, Hercules Ironroot,



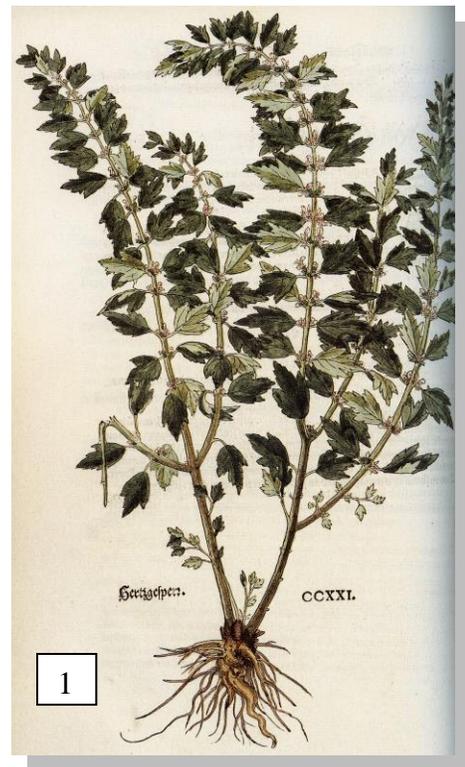
Historical Uses:

Medical: “Venus owns this herb and it is under Leo. There is no better herb to drive melancholy vapours from the heart, to strengthen it and make the mind cheerful, blithe and merry. May be kept in a syrup, or conserve, therefore the Latins call it cardiaca.... It cleansethe

the chest of cold phlegm, oppressing it and killeth worms in the belly. It is of good use to warm and dry up the cold humours, to digest and disperse them that are settled in the veins, joints and sinews of the body and to help cramps and convulsions.

It makes women joyful mothers of children, and settles their wombs as they should be, therefore we call it Motherwort.” (1)

“Divers commend it against the infirmities of the heart: it is judges to be so forceable, that it is thought it took the name of *Cardiaca* for the effect. It is also reported to cure convulsions and cramps, and likewise the palsie: to open the obstructions or



stoppings of the intrails: to kill all

kinds of wormes of the bellie. The powder of the herbe, being given in wine, provoketh not onely urine, or the montly course, but also is good for them that are in hard travel with childe. Moreover, the same is commended for greene wounds: it is also a remedie against certain diseases in cattell, as the cough and murreine, and for that cause divers husbandmen oftentimes much desire it.” (2)

Household: Leaves make a green dye (3).

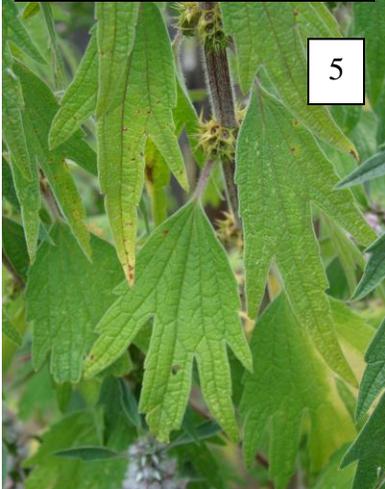
Folklore/Astrology: “Hot and dry in the second degree and under the domain of Venus. If burned, it drives all



Above-Flower stalks



Close-up of flowers



Close-up of leaves

demons from the house and is regenerative, being a herb of life. It also preserves the holder from all weariness. A coal, or piece of jet, may be found beneath it if dug up on Midsummer's Eve; this will keep the finder free from plague, carbuncles, lightning, and fever." (4)

Other: "The name of the genus, *Leonurus*, in Greek signifies a Lion's tail from some fancied resemblance in the plant." "In Mancer's Herbal we find 'Motherwort' mentioned as one of the herbs which were considered all-powerful against 'wykked sperytis'." (5)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: "Whole plant. Plants are cut when flowering, but before seeds are set, and dried for infusions, liquid extracts, and tinctures." (6)

Medicinal: "A very bitter, diuretic herb that acts as a circulatory and uterine stimulant, lowers blood pressure, and relaxes spasms. It is a sedative and nerve tonic, and has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal effects. Used internally for heart complaints and problems associated with menstruation, childbirth, and menopause." (7)

Culinary: "Flower tops are used to flavor beer and stout. Flowers are added to soups and made into tea." (8)

Cautions: Not given to pregnant women

Area of Origin: Temperate Europe and Asia

Physical description: "Strong-smelling perennial with purple stems and palmate, deeply lobed leaves." (9)

Plant type: Perennial

Height: 4ft.

Flower color: Mauve-pink to white, downy with purple-spotted lips.

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained moist soil

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-8

Sun requirements: Full sun to partial shade

Propagation: By seed in spring, by division in spring or autumn

Sources

1. Culpepper, p. 99
2. Gerard, p. 705
3. Anderson, 172
4. Ibid
5. Grieve, p. 557-558
6. Bown, p. 258
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid

Illustrations/Photographs:

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|-----------------|------|
| 1. Fuchs Herbal | 1543 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 3. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 4. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 5. PSUMG | 2012 |