

Common Name: **Dyers Broom**

Genus: *Genista*

Species: *tinctoria*

Family: Fabaceae

AKA: Greenweed, Greenwood, Woad, Wood-waxen, Wede-wixen, Woud-wix, Base-broom

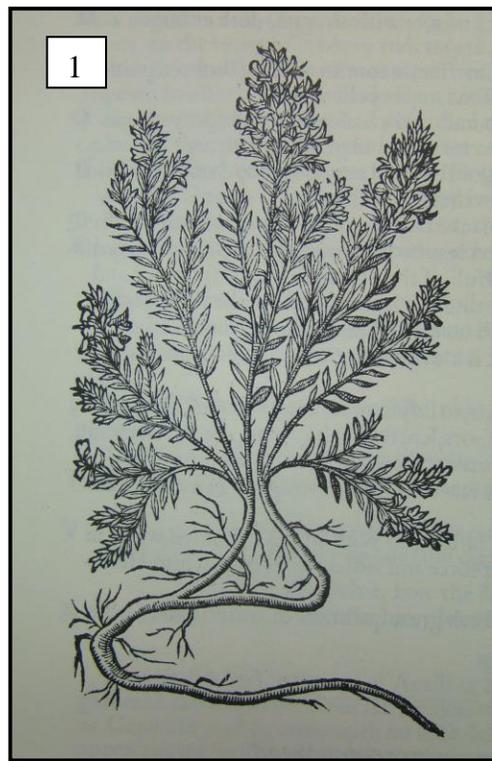


Historical Uses:

Medical: “Diuretic, cathartic, emetic.” “a mild purgative, and a decoction of the plant has been used medicinally as a remedy in dropsy and is also stated to have proved effective in gout and rheumatism” “used as a remedy in dropsy and other diseases” “used in a plaister for broken limbs” (1)

Household: “All parts of the plant, but especially the flowering tops, yield a good yellow dye, and from the earliest times have been used by dyers for producing this color, especially for wool: combined with woad, an excellent green is yielded the color being fixed with alum, cream of tartar and sulfate of lime. In some parts of England, the plant used to be collected in large quantities by the poor and sold to dyers.” (2)

Folklore/Astrology: “These plants are unto common Broome in bitterness, and therefore are hot and drie in the second degree: they are likewise thought to be in virtues equal; notwithstanding their use is not so well knowne, and therefore not used at all where the other may be had: we shall not need to speak of that use that the dyers make thereof, being a matter impertinent to our historie.” (3)



Other: “The name of the genus is derived from the Celtic *Gen* (a small bush).” “**Tournefort** (1708) describes the process of dyeing linen, woolen, cloth or leather by the use of this plant, which he saw in the island of Samos. It is still applied to the same purpose in some of the Grecian islands. The Romans employed it for dyeing and it is described by several of their writers. Is said to enrich poor soil” (4)



Contemporary Uses: Parts Used:
Flowering plant, whole plant

Medicinal: “A bitter, diuretic, purgative, emetic herb” “for gout, rheumatism, and dropsy; externally for fractures, sciatica, abscesses, and tumors” (5)

Culinary: “Flower buds can be pickled as a substitute for capers.” (6)

“In some countries the buds are prepared and served as seasoning.” “The seeds have been

suggested as a substitute for coffee” (7)

Economic: “Flowers yield natural yellow dyes for wool.” (8)

Area of Origin: Mediterranean countries, Western Asia, Britain

Physical description: Variable, deciduous, usually non-spiny shrub with bright green, stalkless, lanceolate leaves

Plant type: Perennial

Form: Shrub

Height: 24-36”

Flower color: Yellow pea

Flowering period: Summer

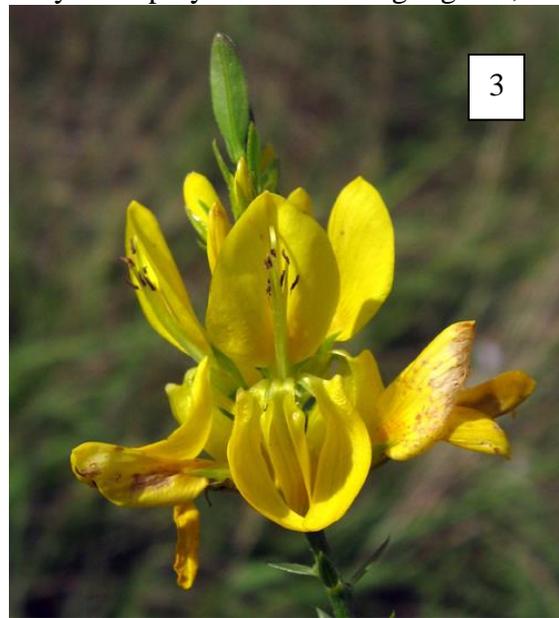
Soil type/requirements: Light, well-drained soil

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-7

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed sown in autumn or spring; by semi-ripe cuttings in summer

Cautions: “It should be treated with caution, given that the alkaloids in *Cytisus* (its close relative) are known to affect the heart and respiration.”(9)



Sources

1. Grieve, p. 375-376
2. Ibid
3. Gerard, p. 1315-1317
4. Grieve, p. 375-376
5. Bown, p. 222
6. Ibid
7. Grieve, p. 375-376
8. Bown, p. 222
9. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

1. Gerard's Herbal 1597
2. <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=280361&isprofile=0&cv=5>
3. https://www.google.com/search?q=genista+tinctoria&rlz=1C1GGRV_enUS748US749&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjcusuwycrUAhVMez4KHZTJC4wQ_AUICigB&biw=1454&bih=948#imgrc=rBIQ2FNwCrOkAM: