

Common Name: **Elecampane**

Genus: *Inula*

Species: *helenium*

Family: Asteraceae

AKA: Scab-wort, Horse-heal, Enula campane, Enola



## Historical Uses:

**Medical:** “The roote is digged up in the summer, & being cut, is dried. The decoction thereof being dranck, doth moove the urine, & ye menstrua. But the roote itself being taken in an eclegma with honye, helps the Tussis, the Orthopneas, ye Ruptures, the Convulsions, the Inflammations, the biting’s of venomous beasts, being generally of a warming facilitie. The leaves thereof sod in wine are profitably applied to such as have the sciatica. The roote is good for ye stomach being condited in Passum.” (1)

“For bladder pain, take this plant called *hinnula campana* or elecampane, wild celery seed, asparagus, and fennel root, pound them together, and give this to drink lukewarm. It heals with certainty. For toothache and loose teeth, take the same plant and give it to eat on an empty stomach. It firms up the teeth. If intestinal worms are seen around the anus, take the same plant, hinnula, and pound it in wine, and lay it on the abdomen.” (2)



“let a person place it dry or green in pure wine. But after it has shriveled up in the wine, it loses its power, so remove it and replace it with new. Let whoever suffers in the lungs drink this moderately daily before or after eating and the poisons will be removed. It also relieves migraines and clears eyes. But if someone drinks this frequently, it will harm the strength of that person. If you do not have wine to put this in, make some pure Hydromel with honey and water. Put this in the elecampane and drink it as previously described. Also take fig, twice as much elecampane, add Galingale, and make a pure drink. Drink this if you have sick lungs and no other illnesses; it is good against the illness of the lungs. If, in addition to the illness of the lungs, you have other illnesses, do not drink it for it is too strong for drinking and you will be harmed by it.” (3)

“It is good for shortness of breath, and an old cough, and for such as cannot breathe unless they hold their necks upright. It is of great virtue both given in a looch, which is a medicine to be licked on, and likewise perserved, as also otherwise given to purge and

void out thicke, tough, and clammy humours, which sticke in the chest and lungs. The root preserved is good and wholesome for the stomack: being taken after supper it doth not onely help digestion, but also keepeth the belly soluble. The juice of the same boiled, driveth forth all kinde of wormes of the belly, as *Pliny* teacheth: who also write if in his twentie booke, and fifth chapter, the same being chewed fasting, doth fasten the teeth. The root of elecampane is with good success mixed with counterpoisons: it is a remedie against the biting's of serpents, it [removeth] poisons: it is good for them that are burdened, and troubled with cramps and convulsions. Some also affirme, that the decoction thereof, and likewise the same beaten into powder and mixed with honie in the manner of an ointment, doth cleanse and heale up old ulcers. *Galen* saith, that herewith the parts are to be made to read, which be vexed with long & cold griefs: as are divers passions of the huckle bones, called Sciatica, and little and continual bunnies and looseness of certaine joints, by reason of overmuch moisture. The decoction of Enula drunken, provoketh urine, and is good for them that are grieved with inward burstings, or have any member out of joint. The root taken with honie or sugar, made into an electuarie, clenseth the breast, ripeneth tough flegme, and maketh it easie to be spet fourth, and prevaieth mightily against the cough and shortnesse of breath, comforteth the stomacke also, and helpeth digestion. The roots condited after the manner of Eringos serviceth for the purposes aforesaid. The root of Enula boiled very soft, and mixed in a mortar with fresh butter and the pouders of Ginger, maketh an excellent ointment against the itch, scabs, manginess, and such like. The roots are to be gathered in the end of September, and kept for sundrie uses, but it is especially preferred by those that make Succade and such like.” (4)



Close-up of the flower

“The virtue of this herb is thus,” states *Banckes Herbal*: “if a man have wagging teeth and eat of this herb, they shall fasten again.” (5)

“For ye confectioners, drying it a little, then afterward having sod it, they macerate it in cold water, then passing it into ye decoction they set up for use. Being pounded, & dranck, it is good for the *Excreantes sanguinem*.” (6)

**Culinary:** “Take elena campana and seethe it in water. Take it up and grind it well in a mortar. Temper it with eggs, saffron and salt and do it over the fire and let it not boil. Cast above powder douce [probably sugar and spices] and serve it forth.” “It is an ingredient in absinthe and in a special aromatic wine produced in Alsace.” (7)



**Folklore/Astrology:**

“Elecampane [*alant*] is of a warm and dry nature and has useful powers.” (8)

“Warm and dry in the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, it belongs to Mercury. It caused mirth in the user, and was chewed to fasten a loose teeth. Its name of Helenium has been explained as being connected with **Helen of Troy**, but this is unlikely.” (9)

**Other:** “Inula is the Latin name

used by **Horace** for the plant. The common name “elecampane” is thought to be a corruption of the medieval Latin *enula campana*, Inula of the fields.” (11)

**Contemporary Uses:**

**Parts Used:** Roots, flowers, oil

**Medicinal:** “A bitter, pungent, aromatic herb that is expectorant and diuretic; it relaxes spasms, reduces inflammation, and increases perspiration. Effective against bacterial and fungal infections, it acts as an alternative, cleansing toxins and stimulating the immune and digestive systems. Internally for bronchitis, hay fever, irritant coughs, asthma, tuberculosis, pleurisy, mucus, and weak digestion associated with mucus formation. Not given to pregnant women. Sometimes recommended externally as a wash for skin inflammations and various ulcers, but may cause allergic reactions.” (12)

It contains inulin, which has a composition very similar to that of starch. It has a slightly better and pungent aftertaste, and smells like a mixture of Irish root and camphor. Elecampane is a curative (in solution) of skin afflictions of men and animals, and is a useful counter irritant for sciatica and neuralgia. It has been used as an antiseptic in surgery, and has antibiotic properties capable of killing the bacillus that causes tuberculosis. A popular medieval remedy, it is now almost obsolete, but is worth reappraisal.” (13)

“Elecampane root is still used in Europe for whooping cough, bronchitis, and asthma. In this country it is employed by veterinary doctors in the treatment of horses. (A common name for elecampane in the middle ages was “horse heal).” (14)

**Culinary:** “Once popular as a flavoring for desserts and fish sauces. Root may be candied or made into a cordial.” (15)

**Economic:** “An ingredient of vermouth and absinthe. Camphor-scented oil used in perfumery.” (16)

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**Area of Origin:** Temperate parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa

**Physical description:** Perennial with thick rhizomes, stout, erect stems, and pointed, toothed leaves to 28 inches long. Yellow daisy like flowers, to 3 inches across appearing in summer. (17)

**Plant type:** Robust perennial

**Form:** Upright

**Height:** Height to 10 feet.

**Flower color:** Yellow

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Moist, well-drained soil

**Hardiness zone:** USDA zone 3-9

**Sun requirements:** Full sun

**Propagation:** By seed sown in spring or autumn; by division in spring

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### **Sources**

1. Dioscorides, book 1, plant 27
2. Van Arsdall, page 192
3. Von Bingen, page 88
4. Gerard, page 793-794
5. Freeman, page 7– 8
6. Dioscorides, book 1, plant 27
7. Freeman, page 7
8. Von Bingen, page 88
9. Anderson, page 153
10. Gerard, page 793
11. Bown, page 243
12. Ibid
13. Anderson, page 153
14. Freeman, page 7– 8
15. Bown, page 243
16. Ibid
17. Ibid

### **Illustrations/Images:**

1. Dover 1997
2. PSUMG 2015
3. <http://mooncatfarms.blogspot.com/2010/06/herbs-e-is-for-elecampane.html>