

Common Name: **Hyssop**

Genus: *Hyssopus*

Species: *officinalis*

Family: Lamiaceae

AKA: Hyssope



Historical Uses:

“Purge me with Hyssop and I shall be clean”(1)

Medical: “It hath a power of extenuating and warming. But being sod with figs & water, with honey also & Rue & soe drank it helps ye peripneumonically, Asthmatically, ye internall cough, ye Catarrh, he Orthopnaea, it doth kill also ye wormes, & being licked in with Honey it doth do the same. And also ye decoction of it being drank with oxymel it expels gross humours through ye belly. It is eaten also with green figs beaten small for ye subduction of ye belly, but it purgeth more forcibly, there being mixed with it Cardamon, or Iris or Irio. It causes also a good colour. It is daubed on also with a figge & niter, for ye Spleen, & ye dropsy, but with wine for inflammations. It dissolveth also sugillations being applied with warm water, & with ye decoction of figgs it is an excellent gargarisme for ye Synanchicall. It assuageth also ye paine of ye teeth being sod with acetum & used as a Lotion. It dissolves also ye windyness about years, being suffumigated.” (2)



“When it is eaten often, it purges the sick and rotting foam of humors, just as warm things, boiling in a pot, throw off the foam. When it is eaten, it makes the liver lively and it cleanses the lungs somewhat. Let whoever suffers shortness of breath, eat hyssop with either meat or lard; the person will get better. If a person eats hyssop only with wine or with water, the person will be harmed more than helped.” (3)

“*Dioscorides* saith, that hyssop boiled with rue and honey, and drunk, helpeth those who are trouble with coughs, shortness of breath, wheezing, and rheumatic distillations of the lungs; taken with oxymel, it expelleth gross humours by stool, and with honey it killeth

worms in the belly; also with fresh or new figs bruised, it helpeth to loosen the belly, but more effectually if the root of the flower-de-luce be added thereto. It restoreth the natural colour of the skin when discoloured by the yellow jaundice, and being taken with figs and nitre it helpeth the dropsy and spleen. Being boiled in wine, it is good to wash inflammations, and taketh away black and blue spots, and marks proceeding from blows, bruises, or falls, if applied with warm water. Being boiled with figs, it makes an excellent gargle for the quinsy or swelling in the throat; or boiled in vinegar and gargled in the mouth it cureth the tooth-ache; the hot vapours of the decoction, taken by a funnel in at the ears, easeth the inflammations and singing noise of them; bruised and mixed with salt, honey and cumin-seed, it is a good remedy for the stinging of serpents; the head being anointed with the oil thereof, it killeth the lice, and allayeth the itching of the same: it helpeth the falling sickness, and expelleth tough phlegm, and is effectual in all cold griefs or diseases of the chest and lungs, being taken either as a medicine or syrup. The green herb bruised, and a little sugar mixed therewith, will speedily heal up any cut or

green wound, being thereto applied.” (4)



A decoction of Hyssop made with figs, and gargled in the mouth and throte, ripeneth & breaketh the tumors and imposthumes of the mouth and throte, and easeth the difficultie of swallowing, coming by cold rheumes. The same made with figges, water, honie, and rue, and drunken, helpeth the inflammation of the lungs, the old cough, and shortnesse of breath, and the obstructions or stoppings of breath.”(5)

Culinary: Would be added to soups, pickles, meat pies and poultry to add a bitter taste.

Folklore/Astrology: “The herb is **Jupiter’s**, under the sign Cancer, consequently strengthens such parts of the body as these govern.”(6)

Other: “Was named from *azob*, a holy herb, because it was used for cleaning holy places, leading to a

quote in Scriptures: ‘Purge me with Hyssop, and I shall be clean.’ Not the Hyssop of the Bible. Some eighteen plants have been proposed as the biblical hyssop.” (7)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Whole plant, oil, leaves, flowers.

Medicinal: “Expectorant, diaphoretic, stimulant, pectoral, carminative. The healing virtues of the plant are due to a particular volatile oil, which is stimulative, carminative and sudorific. In America, an infusion of the leaves is used externally for the relief of muscular rheumatism, and also for bruises and discoloured contusions, and the green herb, bruised and applied, will heal cuts promptly.” (8)

“Hyssop Tea is also a grateful drink, well adapted to improve the tone of a feeble stomach, being brewed with the green tops of the herb, which are sometimes boiled in soup to be given for asthma. A tea made with fresh green tops, and drunk several times daily, is one of the old-fashioned country remedies for rheumatism that is still employed. The infusion has an agreeable flavor and is used by herbalists in pulmonary diseases. Hyssop bath have also been recommended as part of the cure, but the quantity used would need to be considerable.” (9)

“Internally for bronchitis, upper respiratory tract infections and congestion, feverish illnesses and coughs in children, gas, and colic (flowering plant); coughs (flowering plant or flowers). Externally for cuts and bruises (flowering plant); bronchial infections (medicated oil); nervous exhaustion (bath oil). Combined with *Glycyrrhiza glabra* or *Verbascum Thapsus* for persistent coughs, and with *Eucalyptus globulus* and *thumus vulgaris* for bronchial congestion.” (10)

Culinary: “Leaves have a bitter, sage-mint flavor, used sparingly in soups, salads, legumes, and meat dishes. Flowers can be added to salads.” (11)

Economic: It is also used when making the liquor, Chartreuse. Bees also feed on Hyssop, which makes a good-smelling honey.

Other: “The leaves, stems and flowers of *H. officinalis* possess a highly aromatic odor and yield by distillation an essential oil of exceedingly fine odor, much appreciated by perfumers, its value being even greater than Oil of Lavender.” (12)

Cautions: The essential oil might cause fits of epilepsy or death. In some countries the oil is under legal restrictions. (13)

Area of Origin: Southern Europe

Physical Description: Square stems with linear leaves, 2-lipped flowers found on dense spikes, with 6 to 15 flowers.

Plant Type: Evergreen, bushy herb

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Flower Color: Dark Blue (rarely pink or white)

Flowering Period: Late summer

Soil type/requirements: Light, dry soil

pH: neutral to alkaline

Hardiness Zone: USDA Z3-9

Sun Requirements: Sun

Propagation: By seed, sown in April, or can be divided in spring and autumn, or by cuttings made in spring.

Sources

1. Palm 51:7, Bible, KLV
2. Dioscorides, book III, plant 30
3. Von Bingen, pg.62
4. Culpepper, pg. 75
5. Gerard, pg. 579-580
6. Culpepper, pg. 75
7. Anderson, pg. 151
8. Grieve, pg. 426
9. Ibid
10. Bown, pg. 240
11. Ibid
12. Grieve, pg. 426
13. Bown, pg. 240

Illustrations/Images:

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| 1. Gruninger's Herbal | 1500 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2005 |