

Common Name: **Indigo**

Genus: *Indigofera*

Species: *tinctoria*

Family: Fabaceae

AKA: Baptisia, Horse-fly Weed, Rattlebush, Indigo-weed, Sophora tinctoria, Podalyria tinctoria, Rattleweed, Wild indigo

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## Historical Uses:

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**Medical:** “But it is of those that bind gently, and break inflammations, & Oedemata, and doth purge and repress ulcers.” (1)

“Cures erysipelas. It stops any flux of blood, softens boils, and cleanses and heals putrescent, corrosive ulcers” (2)

**Household:** “But of that which is called Indicum, some comes of its own accord being, as it were, ye froth of Indian reeds, but ye other comes of dyeing, being ye flower of purple elevated on the Dye-vats which ye workmen taking off do dry. But it is reckoned to be ye best which is both azurie, & juicy, & smooth.” (3)

“Produces a deep blue, permanent dye-stuff” (4)

**Folklore/Astrology:** “It is warm and dry” (5)

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## Contemporary Uses:

**Parts Used:** Root, bark, leaves

**Medicinal:** “Powdered root is placed in decayed teeth to stop their aching” (6)

“Antiseptic herb that stimulates the immune system and is particularly effective against bacterial infections. It also lowers fever and has laxative and emetic effects.” “Internally for tonsillitis, pharyngitis, and upper respiratory tract infections” “Externally for boils, ulcers, gum disease, sore nipples, and vaginitis” (7)

**Cautions:** “Excess causes nausea and vomiting”(8)

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**Area of Origin:** Asia

**Physical description:** Erect, much-branched perennial, with clover-like leaves



**Plant type:** Herbaceous Perennial

**Form:** Erect

**Height:** 4'

**Flower color:** Yellow

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Well drained, sandy soil

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 5-9

**Sun requirements:** Full sun

**Propagation:** By seed sown when ripe;

by division in early spring.



Close-up of the leaves on a young plant

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### **Sources**

1. Discorides, p. 637
2. Anderson, p. 152
3. Discorides, p. 637
4. Anderson p. 152
5. Ibid
6. Anderson p. 152
7. Bown, p. 141
8. Ibid

### **Illustrations/Images:**

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|------------------------|------|
| 1. Meydenbach's Herbal | 1491 |
| 2. PSUMG               | 2015 |