

Common Name: **Oats**

Genus: *Avena*

Species: *sativa*

Family: Poaceae

AKA: Groats

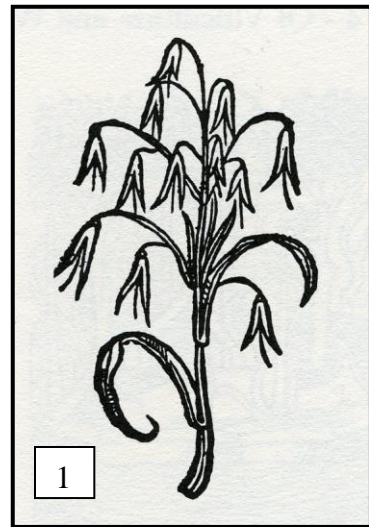


Historical Uses:

Medical: “Common otes put into a linen bag, with a little bay salt quilted handsomley for the same purpose, and made hot in a frying pan, and applied very hot, easeth the paine in the side called the stitch, or collicke in the belly.

If otes be boyled in water, and the hands or feet of such as have the Serpigo or Impetigo, that is, certaine chaps, chinks, or rifts in the palmes of the hands or feet be holden over the fume or smoke thereof in some bowle or other vessell wherein the Otes are put, and the patient covered with blankets to sweat, being first annointed with that ointment or unction usully applied contra Morbum Gallicum: it doth perfectly cure the same in sixe times of anointing and sweating.

Oatmeale is good for to make a faire and welcoloured maid to looke like a cake of tallow, especially if she take next her stomack a good draught of strong vinegar after it. Oatmeale used as a Cataplasme dries and moderately difusses, and that without biting; for it hath somewhat a coole temper, with some astriction, of that it is good against scourings.” (1)



“Oats fried with bay salt and applied to the sides, take away the pains of stitches and wind in the sides of the belly. A poultice made of meal of oats, and some oil of bays put thereunto, helpeth the itch and the leprosy, as also the fistulas of the fundament, and dissolveth hard imposthumes. The meal of oats boyled with vinegar, and applied taketh away freckles and spots in the face, and other parts of the body.” (2)

“Warm oats have a strong taste and strong smell. They are both rich and healthy nourishment for healthy people; they provide a rich mind and pure and clean intellect; and they provide good color and healthy flesh. And oats are good for people who are somewhat and moderately ill. It does not hurt them, whether eaten in bread or cereal. It is not, however, suitable for eating by those who are very ill and cold because oats always seek warmth. If such a person will have eaten oats either in bread or in cereal, they will coagulate in the belly and might produce a biting mucus. It might not give the person strength since they are cold. But let whoever is worn out with paralysis and as a result has a split mind and empty thoughts, so that the person is somewhat insane, be in a sweat bath when the wheat in the hot water in which it has been cooked, is poured over the hot stones. Let them do this often; they will return to themselves and regain sanity.” (3)



Close-up of the cover encapsulating the groats

“The Oate is a reed like unto wheate in ye leaves, but distinguished by knots, but it hath fruit upon the top, as it were twoe footed little locust, wherein is the seed profitable for Cataplasmes as Barley. And Puls also is made of it, binding ye belly. But the creame of it being supt up doth help such as are troubled with the cough.” (4)



Groats before processing

Culinary: “it is used in many countries to make sundry sorts of bread” (5)

“Used as fodder for animals, food for humans, in cakes, biscuits, and porridge, but not bread since it will not rise sufficiently for baking purposes.” (6)

Folklore/Astrology: “Otes are dry and somewhat cold of temperature” (7)

“Although it has long been associated with the devil and the Norse god, Loki, to dream of ripened oats is a favorable sign.” (8)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Seeds, stalks (dried)

Medicinal: “nutritive herb that acts as a tonic to the heart, nerves, and thymus gland, and is externally emollient. Regular consumption of oat germ reduces cholesterol levels. Internally for depression, nervous exhaustion, shingles, herpes, menopausal symptoms, and debility following illness. Externally in preparations for eczema and dry skin.” (9)

“Nervine, stimulant, antispasmodic. Oats are made into gruel. This is prepared by boiling 1 oz of oatmeal or groats in 3 pints of water till reduced to 1 quart, then straining it, sugar, lemons, or raisins being added as flavoring. Gruel thus is a mild nutritious aliment of easy digestion in inflammatory cases and fevers; it is very useful after parturition and is sometimes employed in poisoning from acid substances. It is found useful also as a demulcent enema and boiled into a thick paste makes a good emollient poultice. Oatmeal is insoluble in alcohol, ether, and the oils, but the two first move and oleoresinous matter from it. It is to be avoided in dyspepsia accompanied with acidity of the stomach. The pericarp of Oats contains an amorphous alkaloid, which acts as a stimulant of the motor ganglia, increasing the excitement. A tincture is made by permeating 4oz, of ground oatmeal to 1 pint of diluted alcohol, keeping the first 5 and a half oz, to a half fluid ounces. The extract and tincture are useful as a nerve and uterine tonic.” (10)

Culinary: “Seeds are milled as oatflakes, rolled oats, or flour” “popular for breakfast in the form of oatmeal”. “They are also ingredients of toasted cereal snacks, breads, cookies, pancakes, and specialty beers.” “Seeds are sprouted for salads, dried for granola, or” “juiced or dried for food supplements.” (11)

“Oats are best known as a nutritious cereal, but they benefit health in numerous other ways. Oat bran lowers cholesterol, and an oat-based diet made improve stamina. Oats and oat straw in particular, are tonic when taken medicinally. Oat straw is prescribed by medical herbalists to treat general debility and a wide variety of nervous conditions. The grains and straw are mildly antidepressant, gently raising energy levels and supporting an over stressed nervous system. Oats are used to treat depression and nervous debility, and insomnia in those suffering from nervous exhaustion. Oats are one of the principal herbal aids to convalescence after a long illness. Externally, the grain is emollient and cleansing, and a decoction strained into a bath can help soothe itching and eczema.” (12)

Economic: “Used as fodder for animals” (13)

Other: The harvested oat grains are called “Groats” and is the whole grain, unprocessed. Several different ways of purchasing oats have to do with their processing. For example the basic Quaker Oats is a rolled oat process often referred to as old fashion oats. There is also steel cut oats where the groats are cut into two or three pieces with a sharp metal blade. You can also find stone ground or Scottish oatmeal and rolled oats. Most of the processing is done to cut down on the cooking time by making it easier for the water to penetrate the groats.

Area of Origin: Eurasia and North Africa

Physical description: Erect, annual grass with flat rough leaves, and spreading panicles of large, pendulous spikelets

Plant type: Annual

Height: 1-3’

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained, moist, fertile soil

Fruit: Oat seed/grain

Hardiness zone: USDA 5-10

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed sown in spring

Sources

1. Gerard, p. 75-6
2. Culpepper, p. 107
3. Von Bingen, p. 7
4. Discorides, p. 129
5. Gerard, p. 74
6. Anderson, p. 49
7. Gerard, p. 74
8. Anderson p. 49
9. Bown, p. 138-9
10. Grieve, p. 596-7
11. Bown, p. 138-9
12. Chevallier, p. 174 – 175
13. Anderson, p. 49

Illustrations/Images:

1. Drach's Herbal 1490
2. <http://insulatedoverall.com/?p=5459>
3. <https://pixabay.com/en/photos/oats/>
4. <https://wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/easy-ways-enjoy-whole-grains/grain-month-calendar/oats-%E2%80%93-january-grain-month/types>