

Common Name: **Rye**

Genus: *Secale*

Species: *cereale*

Family: Poaceae

AKA: Rie, Siligo, Tysa, Briza



Historical Uses:

Medical: “However let a person who has lumps in the body, of whatever origin they may be, having baked rye bread in a fire or having taken it warm from the oven and broken off a piece, place it on the lumps. The warmth of its strengths consumes those lumps and makes them disappear. And let the person continue to do this until they disappear. And if the person has a scab on his or her head, let them reduce the crust of wheat bread into crumbs. And let the person sprinkle the crumbs there, because it will remove this malady. After three days, let the person rub olive oil on the same place because it is warm and heals it. Let the person continue to do this until it is healed. And if crabs, tiny slimy larvae, eat the flesh, let a warm bread crumb be placed upon the spot. This should be done often and the crabs will be destroyed by the heat of the crumbs.” (1)

“Bread, or the leaven of Rie, as the Belgian Physitians affirme upon their practise, doth more forcibly digest, draw, ripen, and breake all Apostumes, Botches, and Byles, than the leunen of Wheat” “Rie meale bound to the head in a Linnen Cloath, doth assuage the long continuing paines thereof.” (2)



Seed head with corn poppy (red flower) in rear

“Rye is more digesting than wheat: the bread and the leaves of it ripens and breaks imposthumes, biles, and other swellings : the meal of rye put between a double cloth, and moistened with a little vinegar, and heated in a pewter dish, set over

a chafing-dish of coals, and bound fast to the head while it is hot, does much ease the continual pains of the head.

Matthiolus says, that the ashes of rye-straw put into water, and steeped therein a day and a night, and the chops of the hands or feet washed therewith will heal them.” (3)



Culinary: “The winter rye, which has the largest grain, is what farmers generally cultivate. In many northern countries Rye and Wheat are often mixed and sown together. (4)

“Rye [siligo] is warm, but nevertheless colder than wheat. And it has many strengths. However, bread made from it is good for healthy people and makes them strong. And for those who have fat bodies, it is good for them since it makes their bodies diminish while nevertheless making them strong.” (5)

“Rie as a medicine is hotter than wheat, and more forcible in heating, wasting, and consuming away that whereto it is applied. It is of a more clammy and obstructing nature than wheat, and harder to digest, yet to rusticke bodies that can well digest it, it yields good nourishment.” (6)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Seeds, stems

Culinary: “Makes flour for bread, is distilled for vodka and whiskey” “is roasted as a substitute for coffee.” (7)



Economic: “forms cattle feed, silage, and bedding straw for livestock and growing mushrooms; it also provides packing material, is used in making paper and archery targets” (8)

Area of Origin:
Romania, Bulgaria

Physical description: “It growth up with many stalks, slenderer than those of wheat, and longer with knees or joynts” (9)

Plant type: Annual

Form: Deciduous, erect

Height: To 6’

Flowering period: May-July

Soil type/requirements: Wide range but prefers fertile, well-drained

Ph: 5.6-5.8

Hardiness zone: USDA 3-7

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed late summer to late fall

Sources

1. Hildegard, p. 5-7
2. Gerard, p. 67-68
3. Culpepper, p. 142
4. Ibid
5. Hildegard, p. 5-7
6. Gerard, p. 68
7. Anderson p. 292
8. Ibid
9. Gerard p. 67

Illustrations/Images:

1. Dover Medieval Images 1997
2. <https://pixabay.com/en/cereals-spike-wheat-barley-rye-1577015/>
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4. <https://www.ryvita.co.uk/health-and-nutrition/is-ryvita-good-for-me/the-health-benefits-of-rye-nutrition-ryvita>