

Common Name: **Alkanet**

Genus: *Alkanna* (*Anchusa*)

Species: *tinctoria (officinalis)*

Family: Boraginaceae

AKA: Dyer's Alkanet, Dyer's Bugloss, Spanish Bugloss, Wilde Bugloss, Orchanet.

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## Historical Uses:

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**Medical:** “Dioscorides indicated that the root, made up with oil in a searecloth, is good for old ulcers. With parched barley meale it can be used to treat leprosy and for tetter and ring-worm. A decoction being inwardly taken with mead or honied water, cureth the yellow jaundice. Diseases of the kidneies, the spleene and agues. Good to drive forth the measles and small pox if drunke in the beginning with hot beere.” (1) Antidote for venomous bites. (2)

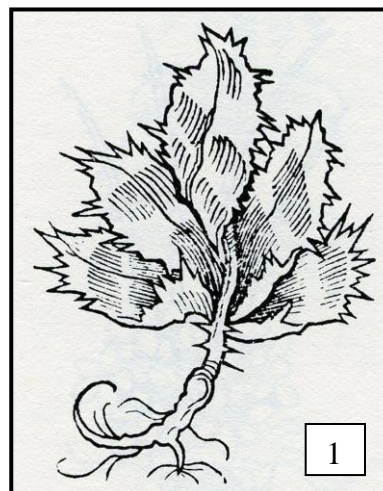
**Culinary:** Roots of these are used to color syrups, waters, jellies, and similar confections. (3)

**Other:** Used in ointments for women's paintings.

**Folklore/Astrology:** Under the domain of Venus. Sacred to Hecate and her daughters Medea and Circe. (4)

**Additional Historical Facts:** “The name *Alkanna* derives from the Spanish word *Alcanna*, which in turn is derived from the Arabic word for henna. Mentioned as a source of a purple dye in Greco-Egyptian texts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.” (5)

Grieve indicates the word comes from the Greek word *Anchousa* meaning paint, from the use of the root as a dye.(6)



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## Contemporary Uses:

**Medical:** Used externally for varicose veins and indolent ulcers, bed sores and itching rashes (7)

**Economic:** Used as a purple colorant for wood, foods, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. (8)

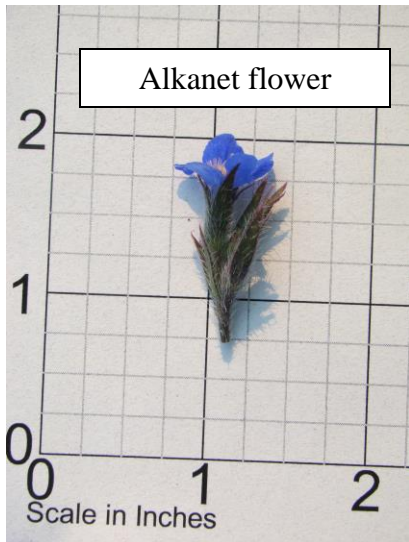
**Parts Used:** Roots

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**Area of Origin:** Southern Europe to Middle East

**Physical description:**





**Plant type:** Perennial in identified zones. Biennial in colder zones.

**Form:** Upright/spreading

**Height:** 24"

**Flower color:** Blue, funnel shaped

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Limestone screes, coastal sands, very dry sandy or alkaline soils.

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 8-9

**Sun requirements:** Full to partial sun

**Propagation:** Sow in cold frame in early spring, plant them out in summer.

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### **Sources**

1. Gerard, pg. 800
2. Ibid
3. Anderson, pg. 20
4. Ibid
5. Bown, pg. 111
6. Grieve, pg. 18-19
7. Bown, pg. 111

### **Illustrations:**

1. Meydenbach Herbal 1491
2. PSUMG 2005
3. PSUMG 2012