

Common Name: **Comfrey**

Genus: *Symphytum*

Species: *officinale*

Family: Boraginaceae

AKA: Knitbone, Knitback, Blackwoort, Bruisewort, Consound, Boneset, Slippery Root, Ass Ear

Historical Uses:



**Medical:**

According to Culpepper "The great Comfrey ("great" to distinguish it from the "Middle Comfrey" - another name for the Bugle) restrains spitting of blood. The root boiled in water or wine and the decoction drank, heals inward hurts, bruises, wounds and ulcers of the lungs, and causes the phlegm that oppresses him to be easily spit forth.... A syrup made there of is very effectual in inward hurts, and the distilled water for the same purpose also, and for outward wounds or sores in the fleshy or sinewy parts of the body, and to abate the fits of agues and to allay the sharpness of humours. A decoction of the leaves is good for those purposes, but not so effectual as the roots. The roots being outwardly applied cure fresh wounds or cuts immediately, being bruised and laid thereto; and is specially good for ruptures and broken bones, so powerful to consolidate and knit together that if they be boiled with dissevered pieces of flesh in a pot, it will join them together again.(1)



Comfrey is cold. If a person eats it without any reason, it destroys all the humors that have been correctly established. But if some member of a person is deficient, ulcerated, or wounded, and the person eats comfrey, it quickly heals the bile and the ulcers on the surface of the skin, but not on the inside of the flesh. Comfrey is similar to stones thrown in a great stream so that the water is kept flowing and much slime settles in, and worms and other evil things remain there. Thus comfrey, eaten immoderately and not in the right way, heals outwardly, but sends all the decay inwardly (2).



The rootes of comfrey stamped and the juice drunke with wine, helpeth those that spit blood, healeth all inward wounds and burstings. The same bruised and laid in a manner of a plaister, doth heale all flesh and

greene wounds, and are so glutenative, that it will sodder or glew together meate that is chopped into peeces seething in a pot, and make one lumpe. The rootes boyled and drunke, doe clense the brest from flegme, and cure the grieses of the lungs, especially if they be conected with sugar and syrup; it prevaieth much against ruptures or burstings (3).

**Culinary:** Young leaves could be eaten as a pot herb.

**Folklore/Astrology:** It is under the dominion of Saturn, and is of a cold, dry nature (4).

**Cautions:** Bristly foliage can be a skin irritant 'yet lesse than those of the nettle' (5).



Close-up of the flowers

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### Contemporary Uses:

**Parts Used:** Leaves and roots. Pick leaves in early summer before flowering and dried

for infusions, liquid extracts, and poultices. Roots are lifted during dormancy and dried for decoctions, liquid extracts and ointments (6).

**Medicinal:** A sweet, mucilaginous, cooling herb with expectorant, astringent, soothing, and healing effects. It reduces inflammation, and controls bleeding. Used internally gastric and duodenal ulcers, chronic bronchial diseases, colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and rheumatism (leaves), Externally for psoriasis, eczema, sores, varicose veins and ulcers, arthritis, sprains, bunions, hemorrhoids, sore breasts during lactation, and injuries, including fractures (7).



View of the open end of the flowers

**Culinary:** Fresh young leaves are added to salads, made into fritters, or cooked as a vegetable. Dried leaves are made into tea (8).

**Cautions:** Tablets and capsules of this herb may be subject to legal restrictions in some countries.

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**Area of Origin:** Europe, Mediterranean to the Caucasus

**Physical description:**

**Plant type:** Perennial

**Height:** 2-4ft.

**Flower color:** Purple to pink or white, funnel shaped

**Flowering period:** Summer

**Soil type/requirements:** Moist to wet

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 4-9

**Sun requirements:** Full sun or partial shade

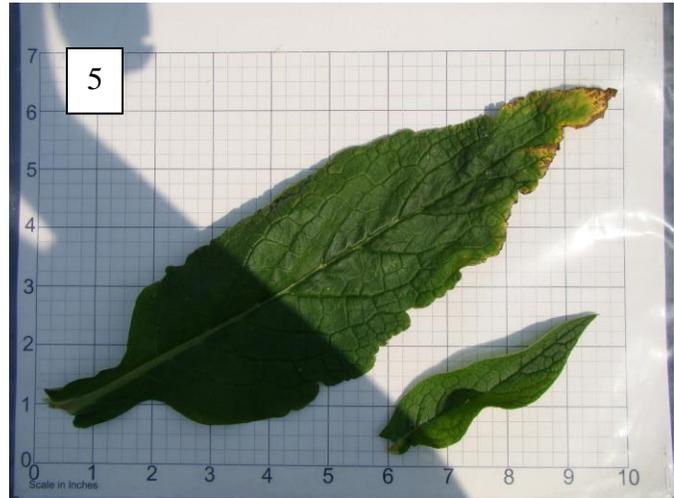
**Propagation:** By seed in autumn or spring, by division in autumn or spring.

**Bibliography**

1. Grieve, pg. 215-218
2. Von Bingen, pg. 133
3. Gerard, pg. 806
4. Anderson, pg. 309-310
5. Gerard, pg. 806
6. Bown, pg. 377
7. Ibid
8. Ibid

**Illustrations:**

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|--------------------|------|
| 1. Schoffer Herbal | 1485 |
| 2. PSUMG           | 2005 |
| 3. PSUMG           | 2011 |
| 4. PSUMG           | 2011 |
| 5. PSUMG           | 2011 |



View of mature and younger leaves