

Common Name: **Common Plantain**

Genus: *Plantago*

Species: *major*

Family: Plantaginaceae

AKA: Broad-leaved Plantain, Ripple Grass, Waybread, Slan-lus, Waybread, Snakeweed, Cuckoo's Bread, White Man's Foot, (Anglo-Saxon)Waybroed

Historical Uses:



Medical: “Heals and cleans wounds of putrefaction and strengthens the liver. Used in cases of erysipelas (skin infection), it also reduces hemorrhoids, soothes burns, aids in dysentery, diarrhea, and menorrhoea, helps pulmonary ulcers, and stops toothache. The juice mixed into vinegar removes black spots from the skin, heals wounds about the eyes and nose, is good for pustules, putrid mouths, fistulas, corrosive ulcers, and running ulcers, opens passages of the liver and kidneys, cures the bites of mad dogs and is a diuretic.” (1)

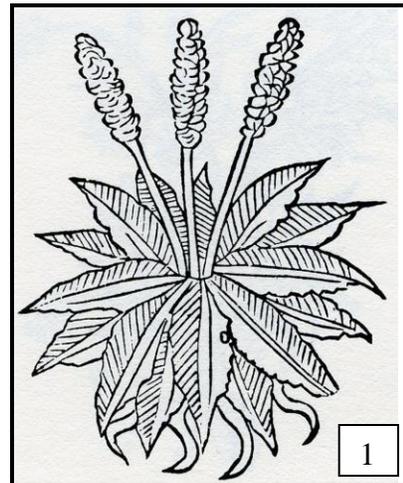
“Take plantain and express its juice. When it has been tempered with wine or honey and has been stained through a piece of cloth, give it to drink to the person who suffers from gout, and the gout will end. Let the person who has swollen glands dry the root of the plantain in a fire a place it warm over the gland, tying a piece of cloth over it. The person will be better. Do not,



however, place it over scrofula because this would harm the person. If a spider or other vermin touches or stings a person, the spot should be smeared with plantain juice. And if a man or woman should drink a love potion, plantain juice should be given to them to drink, with or without water.” (2)

“Good for ulcers, stayeth bleeding, when drunken stoppeth the bloody flux. Root and seed, when boyled in white Wine and drunke, openeth the conduits or passages of the liver and kidnies. The Juyce dropped in the eyes doth coole the heat and inflammation thereof. The leaves are singular good to make a water to wash a sore throat or mouth, or privy parts of a man or woman.” (3)

Culinary: Young leaves can be eaten in salads.



Household: The coat of mucilage which covers the seeds, when broken down in hot water, was at one time used for stiffening some kinds of muslin and other woven fabrics.

Other: Used as grazing for sheep. Seed can be used for bird feed.(4)

Folklore/Astrology: “Cold and dry in the second degree. Ruled by Venus. One of the nine plants held sacred by the Saxons. The plant, which becomes a cuckoo once every seven years, is a bulwark against evil and symbolizes the many who seek to tread upon the path to salvation.” (5)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves, roots, seeds. Plants are cut during the growing season and used fresh, as juice, or dried for decoctions. Leaves are cut before flowering and dried for infusions, liquid extracts and for infusions. Ripe seeds are dried for decoctions and powders (6).

Medicinal: An astringent herb that is a diuretic, expectorant, and anti-mucus, promotes healing, controls bleeding, and is effective against bacterial infections.

Used internally for diarrhea, hemorrhage, hemorrhoids, cystitis, bronchitis, mucus, sinusitis, asthma, hay fever, ear infections, dry cough gastritis, gastric ulcers, and irritable bowel syndrome. Externally used for wounds, bruises, insect bites, ulcers, eye inflammations, shingles, hemorrhoids, and varicose ulcers (7).

Culinary: Seeds are eatable, dried leaves can be made into a tea(8).

Area of Origin: Europe through temperate Asia.

Physical description: Below a large mass of long, straight roots and above a radial rosette of leaves and long slender flower heads. Leaves are ovate and blunt, 4 to 10 inches long.(X)

Plant type: Perennial “weed”

Height: 12”-24”

Flower color: Minute white-yellow-green flowers

Soil type/requirements: Moist soil

Hardiness zone: USDA 3-9

Sun requirements: Full to part sun

Propagation: By seed in autumn or spring. Self-seeds freely.

Bibliography

1. Anderson, pg. 242-243
2. Von Bingen, pg. 94
3. Gerard, pg. 419-420
4. Grieve, pg. 640-642
5. Anderson, pg. 242-243
6. Bown, pg. 322-323
7. Ibid
8. Ibid

Illustrations:

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| 1. Schoffer Herbal | 1485 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2012 |