

Common Name: **Rue**

Genus: *Ruta*

Species: *graveolens*

Family: *Rutaceae*

AKA: Herb of Grace, Garden Rue, Herb of Repentance, Herbygrass, Rude

Historical Uses:



MEDICINAL



MAGIC



SEASONINGS
FLAVORINGS



BEVERAGE

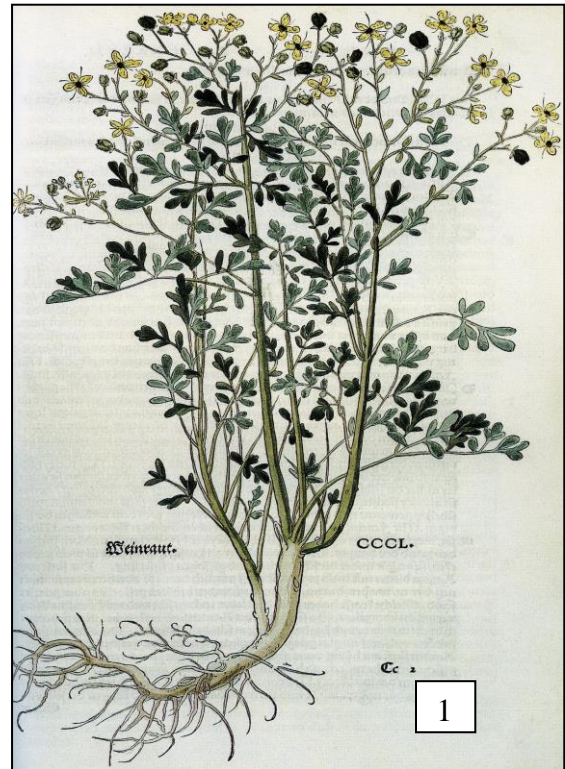
Medical:

“For swellings, take the same plant, ruta, and give it fresh a little at a time to eat or in a drink. For stomachache, take the seeds of this same plant, sulphur, and vinegar. Give this to eat on an empty stomach. For eye pain and swelling, take the same plant, pounded well, and lay it on the sore eyes. Also pounded roots smeared on cure pain very well. For the illness that is called lithargum, and in our language forgetfulness, take the same plant, soaked in vinegar. Sprinkle it on the temples. The plant also helps cure carbuncles.” (1)

“Rue (*rutha*) grows more from the strength and full greenness of the earth than from its warmth. It has moderate warmth, but nevertheless, more warmth than cold. It has great strength in its moisture, and it is good against the dry bitterness that springs up in the person who lacks the right humors. It is better raw than pulverized in food, When it

has been eaten, it checks the unjust lust in a person’s blood. For the warmth of rue lessens the unjust warmth of melancholy and moderates the unjust coldness of melancholy so that the person who is melancholy is better when he or she has eaten it after other foods. But if a person eats some other food that causes pain, let them eat rue afterwards and the pain will diminish.”(2)

“Rue or Herb Grace provoked urine, brings down the sickness, expels the dead child and after-birth, being inwardly taken, or the decoction drunk; and is good for the mother, if but smelled to. It takes away crudity and rawness of humors, and also windiness and old pains of the stomach. Boiled with vinegar it eases pains, is good against the stitch of the side and chest, and shortness of breath upon a cold cause, and also against pain in the joints and knuckle bones. St. Anthony’s fire is quenched therewith: it killeth the shingles and running ulcers and sores in the heads of young children, if it be tempered





Plant in early summer

with Ceruse or white Lead, vinegar, and oile of roses, and made into the forme of *Nutritum* or *Triapharmacon*.

Dioscorides saith, the Rue put up in the nostrils stayeth bleeding.”(3)

“Ye garden kinde, that is the fittest that grows near fig trees. Being eaten before-hand ye leaves by themselves, or with wallnuts, or with dry figs, it makes poisons ineffectual, and in like sort being taken it is good against serpent-bitings and either eaten, or drank it extinguisheth geniture. But being sodden with Dill dried, and drank, it ceaseth ye Tormina. It is good also for ye paine of ye sides, of ye breast, hard breathing, coughs, ye lung inflammation, ye griefs of ye hip, of ye joints, periodical rigors, being drank as is aforesaid.” (4)

“It provokes urine and women’s courses, being taken either in meat or drink. The seed taken thereof taken in wine , is an antidote against all dangerous medicines, or deadly poisons. It kills and drives forth the worms of the belly, if it be drank, after it is boiled in wine to the half, with a little honey: it helps the gout or paines in the joints, hands, feet or knees, applied thereunto; with figs it helps the dropsy, being bathed therewith: being bruised and put into the nostrils, it stays the bleeding thereof: it helps the swelling of the testicles, if they be bathed with a decoction of rue and bay leaves.”(5)

Culinary: “Rue, though bitter, was often used in the Middle Ages as a seasoning for salads, herb omelettes, and sauces for fish. Since it appears among herbs “for the coppe” in a fifteenth century manuscript, it probably also flavored wines and beers.”(6)

Folklore/Astrology: Hot and dry in the latter end of the third degree. (7) It is an herb of the Sun, and under Leo.”(8) “Together with geranium and willow, it made a magic wreath used to foretell the



Close-up of the leaves

length of one's single state. Rue also enabled one to see witches, gave second sight, and prevented the effects of witchcraft and magic, although itself is useful in weaving spells. Hung about the neck, it prevented epilepsy and drove fleas from the house.”(9)

Other: Used to sprinkle holy water before high mass was celebrated. The name Rue is said to come from the Greek *reuo*, “to set free”, particularly freeing one from disease. Recommended by the Greek *Hippocrates* and used as the chief ingredient of the poison antidote used by *Mithridates*.(10) “*Pliny* saith that there is such friendship between it and the fig tree, that it prospers no where so well as under a fig tree.”(11)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves

Medicinal: “Internally for menstrual problems, colic, epilepsy, palsy, and rheumatic pain. Excess affects central nervous system and may prove fatal. Contraindicated during pregnancy. Externally for sore eyes, earache, skin diseases, neuralgia, and rheumatism. Used in homeopathy for sprains, bruising over bones, tennis elbow, backache, weak eyesight, and eye strain.” (12)

Culinary: “The pungent, bitter leaves can be used to flavor vinegar. Seeds are used to flavor palm wine (N Africa), and are ground as an ingredient of Ethiopian spice mixtures.” (13)

Economic: “Leaves are used to flavor Italian grape spirit (*grappa*), and were an ingredient of sack (*mead*).” (14)

Cautions: “Serious skin irritant in sunlight, causing severe blistering.” (15)

Area of Origin: Northern Africa, southern and central Europe

The following information is taken from Bown

Physical description: Small, evergreen or semi-evergreen subshrub with glaucous, gray-green leaves.

Plant type: Evergreen

Form: Upright

Height: 24in

Flower color: Mustard yellow

Flowering period: Summer

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained, neutral to alkaline soil.

Hardiness zone: USDA zone 4-8

Sun requirements: Full sun.

Propagation: By seed sown in spring; by semi-ripe cuttings in summer.

Sources

1. Arsdall, pg.188-189
2. Von Bingen, pg. 60
3. Gerard, pg. 1254-1257
4. Dioscorides, Bk. 3, 52
5. Culpeper, pg. 140-141
6. Freeman, pg. 12-13
7. Gerard, pg.1254-1257

8. Culpeper, pg. 140-141
9. Anderson, pg.280
10. Grieve, pg.694-696
11. Gerard, pg.1254-1257
12. Bown, 352
13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

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| 1. Fuch's Herbal | 1543 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2005 |
| 3. PSUMG | 2013 |