

Common Name: **Smallage**

Genus: *Apium*

Species: *graveolens*

Family: *Apiaceae*

AKA: Wild Celery, Water Parsley, Apium, Merce



Historical Uses:

Medical:

“Ye herb of it is good for ye things also that Coriander is, and for ye inflammations of ye eyes being applied with bread or ye flour of Potenta, and it assuageth ye burning of ye stomach; and it slacks breasts swollen with clotted milk, and it moves urine being eaten sodden, or raw; and the decoction of it and ye roots, being drank resisteth poisonous medicines, moving vomitings, and it stops ye belly, but the seed is more ureticall, helping also ye bitten by poisonous beasts and those who have drunk Lithargyrum, and it is also a breaker of wind. It is mixed also profitably with pain-easing, and theriacall, and cough medicines.” (1)

“For eye pain and swelling. Take the plant called apium or wild celery pounded well with bread and lay it on the eyes.” (2)

“It has much juice and is not good for a person to eat raw since it gives the person a lot of bad humors. However, when it is cooked, it is not harmful and brings a lot of healthy humors to a person. Nevertheless, in whatever way it is eaten, it induces a wandering mind since its greenness sometimes harms and makes a person sad with instability. Let whoever has watery eyes so that he or she overflows with dripping tears from superabundant humors take celery and a little more fennel, pound this into a juice, and dip this into egg white without the yolk. When the person goes to sleep, let them tie this over their watery eyes with a piece of cloth.” (3)

“The roots are diuretic, very good for the stoppage of urine, and stone and gravel; they open obstructions of the liver and spleen; help the dropsy and jaundice; remove female obstructions. The leaves are of the same nature. The plant is one of the herbs that are eaten in spring, to sweeten and purify the blood, and help the scurvy; the seed is hot and



carminative, and is one of the four lesser hot seeds, as the root is one of the five opening roots.” (4)



“Smallage, as **Pliny** writeth, hath a peculiar virtue against the biting of venomous spiders. The juice of Smallage mixed with hony and beane floure, doth make an excellent mundificative for old ulcers and malignant sores, and staieth also the weeping of the cut or hurt sinews in simple members, which are not very fatty or **shie, and bringeth the same to perfect digestion. The leaves boiled in hogs grease and made into the forme of a pultis, take away the paine of felons and whitlowes in the fingers, and ripen and heale them.” (5)

“The root is diuretic, as is the herb, which is also a stomachic. Its seeds and oil are parts used in medicine. Chewed, they overcame bad breath; in wine, they eased flatulence and internal obstructions, moved stones in the kidneys and bladder, and cured dropsical

conditions from cold causes (pneumonia and related heart failure). Used as a plaster on the spleen and liver, or for rectal discomfort.” (6)

Ornamental: “Celery has been used by humans for over 3000 years (celery leaves and flower heads were part of the garlands found in the tomb of pharaoh Tutankhamun who died in 1323 BCE). Indeed, in classical Greece, celery leaves were used as garlands for the dead, and the wreaths of the winners at the Isthmian Games were first made of celery before being replaced by crowns made of pine. Pliny the elder also relates that the winners of the sacred Nemean Games of Achaea also wore wreaths made of celery.” (7)

Folklore/Astrology: Warm in the first degree, dry in the second. (8) “Is more green than dry nature.” (9) “Like carrots and caraway, it is under Mercury.” (10)

Other: “The first incidence of the use of Celery in English comes from the early 1660s, and this late adoption is a surprise to many. The English word celery is



derived from the French céleri, which itself is derived from the Lombard dialect seleri which comes from the Classical Latin selinon that is, itself derived from the Ancient Greek σέλινον (selinon), literally meaning 'parsley'. In Homer's Iliad, the poet relates how the horses of the Myrmidons graze on wild celery that grows in the marshes of Troy, and in Odyssey, there is mention of the meadows of violet and wild celery surrounding the cave of Calypso. In classical Greece, the spicy odour and dark leaf colour of celery encouraged its association with the chthonic cults of the dead. (11)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Ripe seeds, herb, root, oil

Medicinal: “An aromatic, bitter, tonic herb that reduces blood pressure, relieves indigestion, stimulates the uterus, and has diuretic and anti-inflammatory effects. Sedative and aphrodisiac effects have been reported. Internally for osteo-arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, and inflammation of the urinary tract. Externally for fungal infections and tumors.” (12)

Culinary: “Rarely used for culinary purposes because of its bitterness and toxicity in large amounts. Seeds in small quantities can be used to flavor soups and stews.” (13)

Cautions: Should not be given to pregnant women. (14)

Area of Origin: Southern Europe, eastern Mediterranean

Physical description: Bulbous fleshy root, solid grooved stems, pinnately divided leaves. (15)

Plant type: Biennial

Form: Upright

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Flower color: Light-green flowers

Flowering period: Early to mid-summer

Soil type/requirements: Damp, rich soil,

Hardiness zone: USDA 7-9 as perennial

Sun requirements: Full sun to partial shade

Propagation: By seed in spring

Sources

1. Dioscorides, Bk. 3, 74
2. Van Arsdall, pg. 201
3. VonBingen, pg. 69-70
4. Culpeper, pg. 159
5. Gerard, pg. 1015
6. Anderson, pg. 32
7. celtnet.org.uk/recipes/herb-entry.php?term=Celery (retrieved July 12, 2013)
8. Anderson, pg. 32
9. VonBingen, pg. 69-70
10. Culpeper, pg. 159
11. celtnet.org.uk/recipes/herb-entry.php?term=Celery (retrieved July 12, 2013)
12. Bown, pg. 125
13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

Illustrations/Images:

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