

Common Name: **Tansy**

Genus: *Tanacetum*

Species: *vulgare*

Family: Asteraceae

AKA: *Chrysanthemum vulgare*, Buttons

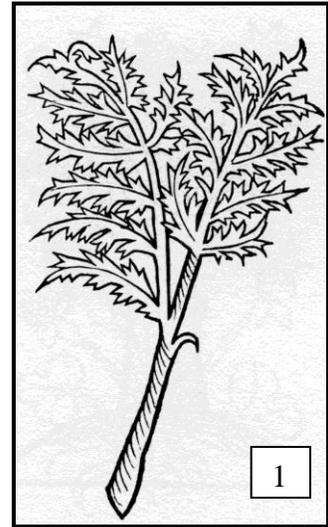
Historical Uses:



Medical: “Tansy is good against all overabundant humors that flow out. Let whoever has catarrh and coughs because of it eat tansy either in broth or in a paste, with meate or in some other way. This checks the humors so that they do not increase and thus they decrease. And let whoever has a harsh cough prepare tansy with whole wheat flour and eat it often. This dissolves the dryness and inner injuries of the cough.” (1)

In a fifteen century manuscript it is included among the “herbez to style (distill)”. It is one of several herbs in a fourteenth century prescription for cure of the plague (2)

“Tansy cooked in cakes or with eggs be good for the stomacke. For if any bad humours cleave thereunto, it doth perfectly concoct them, and scowre then downwards. The root preerued with honey or sugar, it is especial thing against the gout, if every day for a certaine space, a reasonable quantitie thereof be eaten fasting. The seed of the tansy is a singular and approved medicine against wormes, for in what sort so ever be taken, it killeth and driueth them forth. Also being drunke with wine, it is good against the paine of the bladder, and when a man cannot pisse but by drops.” (3)



“Being boiled in water and drank, it eases the griping pains of the bowels, and is good for the sciatica and joint-ache. The same boiled in vinegar, with honey and alum, and gargled in the mouth, eases the pains of the tooth-ache, fastens loose teeth, helps the gums that are sore, settles the palate of the mouth in its place, when it is fallen down.”(4)

Culinary: The young leaves of tansy mixed with eggs was known as “tansy”. At Easter time, it was a favorite dish (cakes and pudding) eaten to celebrate the end of Lent. Also, it was believed to be of value in purifying the “bad humours” of the body after a long diet of salt fish (5).

Household: Used to repel insects. In Middle Ages fresh meat from the butcher was wrapped in tansy leaves to keep flies away.

Folklore/Astrology: “Under the rule of Venus, hot in the second degree and dry in the third. Associated by the Greeks with immortality since its name was *athanasia* or *ananatos* meaning “deathless” or “immortality”, shortened in English to Tansy.” (6) Worn in one’s shoe, it warded off fever, and in parts of Italy the stalks are presented as an insult.



Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Whole plant. Cut when flowering. Leaves are picked as required, and used fresh or dried in infusions, liquid extracts, powders and tinctures.

Medicinal: “A bitter, acrid, warming herb with a pungent aroma. It expels intestinal parasites, benefits the digestion, and stimulates the uterus. Mainly used as an enema for expelling round and threadworms in children, and topically in lotions for scabies, lice, and fleas. The herb is possibly unsafe for internal use, especially in pregnancy, although sometimes recommended for nausea and failure to menstruate.” (7)

Culinary: Leaves are used with discretion for flavoring in some cakes and puddings.



Close-up of the flowers

Cautions: Tansy oil is highly toxic for both internal and external use. Can be an invasive depending on location. (8)

Area of Origin: Europe

Physical description: The stem is erect to about 4ft. with alt. leaves.

Plant type: Perennial

Height: 2 to 4 ft

Flower color: Yellow, button-like

Flowering period: Late summer,

autumn

Soil type/requirements: Well-drained to dry soil

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-9

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed in spring, by division in spring or autumn; by basal cuttings in spring.

Sources:

1. Von Bingen, p. 103
2. Freeman, p. 15
3. Gerard, p. 649-641
4. Culpeper, p. 176
5. Freeman, p. 15
6. Tucker, p. 573
7. Bown, p. 381-382
8. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

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| 1. Jacob Meydenbach | 1491 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2005 |
| 3. PSUMG | 2012 |
| 4. PSUMG | 2012 |