

Common Name: **Valerian**

Genus: *Valeriana*

Species: *officinalis*

Family: Valerianaceae

AKA: Nardos, Setwall, Capons Tail

Historical Uses:



Medical: “The drie root, as Dioscorides teacheth, provoketh urine, bringing downe the desired sicknesse, helpeth pain in the sides, and is put into counter-poisons and medicines. It is used generally in slight cuts, wounds and small hurts. The extraction of the roots given, is a most singular medicine against the difficulties of making water, and the yellow jaundies. Good for them that be troubled with the crampe and convulsions, and also for those that are bruised with falls. The leaves of these are good against ulcers and sores of the mouth and gums, if the decoction thereof be gargarized or held in the mouth.” (1)

Ornamental: Showy flowers with fragrance.

Household: Roots serve as rat bait. May also attract cats.

Folklore/Astrology: Warm and dry in the second degree, it is in the domain of Mercury. (2)

Other: Used by Hippocrates in the 4th century BC. (3)



Contemporary Uses:

Parts used: Rhizomes, roots, oil.

Medicinal: Used internally for insomnia, hysteria, hyperactivity, anxiety, cramps, muscular tension and spasms, migraine, indigestion brought on by nerves, hypertension and painful menstruation. Used externally for eczema, ulcers and minor injuries (4).

Culinary: An ingredient in some tea blends. Extracts are used to flavor foods, bakery products and beverages.(5)

Economic: Oil is used in some perfumes. Roots used as bait for rats and feral cats.(6)

Cautions: May cause drowsiness.

Area of Origin: Europe, Northern Asia

Physical description: Clump forming perennial w/ short rhizomes and aromatic leaves.

Plant type: Perennial

Valerian in flower



Form: Upright, spreading
Height: To 5 ft.
Flower color: Pinkish White
Flowering period: June through August
Soil type/ requirements:
Fruit: Inconspicuous
Hardiness zone: USDA 5-9
Sun requirements: Full to part sun
Propagation: By cuttings or division in spring, by seed sown in spring.



Close-up view of flowers

Sources:

1. Gerard, p. 1075-1078
2. Anderson, p. 331
3. Grieve, p. 824-829
4. Bown, pg. 399-400
5. Ibid
6. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

1. Gerard 1633
2. PSUMG 2011
3. PSUMG 2011