

Common Name: **Licorice**

Genus: *Glycyrrhiza*

Species: *glabra*

Family: Papilionaceae

AKA: *Liquiritia officinalis*, Lycorys (thirteenth century), Lacris (Welsh), Reglisse (French), Lacrisse (German), Regolizia (Italian), Glycyrrhiza (Latin)



## Historical Uses:

**Medical:** "...But ye juice is good for ye shapenesses of ye Arterie, but they must put it under ye tounge to let it melt. It is good likewise for ye burning of ye stomach & for ye griefs in ye thorax, & ye liver, & for ye scabies vesicae, and kidney griefs. Being drank with Passum, & melted in ye mouth it is a quencher of thirst, & healer of wounds being anointed about, & being chewed it is good for ye stomach, & ye decoction of new roots is good for the same. But the dry root being beaten small is a fit sprinkling for ye Pterygia." (1)

"The root of Licorice is good against the rough harshness of the throat and brest; it openeth the pipes of the lungs when they be stuffed or stopped, and ripeneth the cough, and bringeth forth flegme. The juice of Licorice made according to Art, and hardned into a lumpe, which is called *Succus Liquiritiae*, serveth well for the purposes aforesaid, being holden under the tongue, and there suffered to melt... The juice of Licorice is profitable against the heate of the stomacke, and of the mouth. The same is drunke with wine of Raisons against the infirmities of the liver and chest, scabs, or sores of the bladder, and diseases of the kidneyes..." (2)

Licorice [*liquiricio*] is moderately warm. No matter how it is eaten, it gives a person a clear voice, makes his or her mind pleasant, and causes clear eyesight. It soothes the stomach for digestion. But it is also beneficial to the insane person if eaten often because it extinguishes the furor in the person's head." (3)





“Licorice boiled in fair water, with some maiden-hair and figs, maketh a good drink for those that have a dry cough or hoarseness, wheezing or shortness of breath, and for all griefs of the breast and lungs, phthisic or consumptions caused by the distillations of the reins, the stranguary, and heat of urine: the fine powder of licorice blown through a quill into the eyes that have a pin and web (as they call it) or rheumatic distillations in them, doth cleanse and help them. The juice of licorice is as effectual in all the diseases of the breast and lungs, the reins and the bladder, as the decoction. The juice distilled in rose-water, with some green tragacanth, is a fine licking medicine for hoarseness, wheezing, etc.” (4)

For a dry fever, take the plant called glycyrida or ...[*licorice*] and boil it gently in warm water. Give it to drink, and it helps effectively. This plant also heals pain in the chest, liver, bladder, and kidneys when cooked and taken in wine. It also relieves thirst. For diseases of the mouth, the roots of this plant eaten or drunk help the conditions. It also clears up any kind of intestinal disturbance and chases out disease.” (5)

**Culinary:** “...Moreover, with the juice of Licorice, Ginger, and other spices, there is made a certaine bread or cakes, called Gingerbread, which is very good against the cough, and all the infirmities of the lungs and breast: which is cast into moulds, some of one fashion, and some of another.” (6)

**Folklore/Astrology:** “It is under the dominion of *Mercury*.” (7)

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### Contemporary Uses:

**Parts Used:** Roots

**Medicinal:** “The action of Licorice is demulcent, moderately pectoral and emollient. It is a popular and well-known remedy for coughs, consumption and chest complaints generally, notably bronchitis, and is an ingredient in almost all popular cough medicines



Close-up of the licorice leaf

on account of its valuable soothing properties. The Extract enters into the composition of cough lozenges and pastilles, with sedatives and expectorants. It is largely used in conjunction with infusion of linseed in the treatment of irritable cough, sore throat and laryngitis, and an infusion made by boiling 1 oz. of the bruised root deprived of its bark, with 1 pint of water for a few minutes, may be employed in the treatment of a sore throat and in catarrhal conditions of the urinary intestinal tracts.” (8)

“Internally for Addison’s disease, asthma, bronchitis, coughs, peptic ulcer, arthritis, allergic complaints, and following steroid therapy. Not given to pregnant women or patients with anemia, high blood pressure, kidney disease, or taking digoxin-based medication. Excess causes water retention and high blood pressure. Externally for eczema, herpes, and shingles. For use by qualified practitioners only.” (9)

**Culinary:** “Roots (‘licorice sticks’) are chewed as candy.” (10) “Licorice contains a compound, glycyrrhizin, which is fifty times as sweet as sugar.” (11)

**Economic:** “Licorice extract and powder are used in candy and to flavor tobacco, beer, soft drinks, and pharmaceutical products (notably laxatives); also as an ingredient in herb teas, a foaming agent in beers and fire extinguishers, and colorant in stout.” (12)  
The remaining fibers, after extraction of the glycyrrhizin, are utilized in wallboard insulation.” (13)

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**Area of Origin:** Mediterranean, Southwest Asia

**Physical description:** Variable perennial with stoloniferous roots, downy stems, and pinnate leaves.

**Plant type:** Perennial

**Height:** 5’

**Flower color:** Pale blue, violet

**Flowering period:** May-August

**Soil type/requirements:** Deep, rich, sandy soil in sun. Slightly alkaline, moisture-retentive conditions give the best results.

**Fruit:** Oblong pods 1 ¼” long, containing 2-4 kidney-shaped seeds.

**Hardiness zone:** USDA 7-9

**Sun requirements:** Full sun

**Propagation:** By seed sown in spring; by division in autumn or spring; by stolon cuttings in spring. Seeds should be scarified or soaked overnight to speed germination.

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## **Sources**

1. Dioscorides, p. 238-240
2. Gerard, p. 1302
3. Von Bingen, p. 24
4. Culpepper, p. 86
5. Van Arsdall, p. 213
6. Gerard, p. 1302

7. Culpepper, p. 86
8. Grieve, p. 487-491
9. Bown, p. 226-227
10. Ibid
11. Anderson, p.138-139
12. Bown, p. 226-227
13. Anderson, p.138-139

**Illustrations/Images:**

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| 1. Gerard's Herbal | 1633 ed. |
| 2. PSUMG           | 2006     |
| 3. PSUMG           | 2006     |