

Common Name: **Meadow Clary**

Genus: *Salvia*

Species: *sclarea*

Family: Lamiaceae

AKA: Wild English Clary, Clary Sage, Oculus Christi, Christ's Eye, Clarry, Orvale, Clear Eye, See Bright, Eyebright



Historical Uses:

Medical: "...But with Honey it leaseth away ye Argema & ye Albugines of ye eyes, & being smeared on with water it dissolves Oedemata & draws out splinters, and ye herb being applied, doth perform ye same things. But ye wild hath a stronger force, whence also it is mixed with compound ointments, especially with Gleucinum." (1)

"The feed of wilde Clarie, as *Dioscorides* writeth, being drunke with wine, stirreth up lust, it clenseth the eies from filmes and other imperfections, being mixed with honie. The seede put whole into the eies, clenseth and purgeth them exceedingly from waterish humours, rednesse, inflammation, and divers other maladies, or all that happen unto the eies, and takes away the paine and smarting thereof, especially being put into the eies one seede at one time, and no more, which is a generall medicine in Cheshire and other Countries thereabout, knowne of all, and used with good successe..." (2)



"...The seeds of it being beaten to powder, and drank with wine, is an admirable help to provoke lust. A decoction of the leaves being drank warms the stomach, and it is a wonder if it should not, the stomach being under **Cancer**, the house of the **Moon**. Also it helps digestion, and scatters congealed blood in any part of the body. The distilled water hereof cleanseth the eye of redness, waterishness, and heat: It is a gallant remedy for dimness of sight, to take one of the seeds of it, and put it into the eyes, and there let it remain till it drops out of itself, (the pain will be nothing to speak on,) it will cleanse the eyes of all filthy and putrified matter; and in often repeating it, will take off a film which covereth the sight; a handsomer, safer, and easier method by a great deal, that to tear it off with a needle." (3)



Meadow Clary in flower

Culinary: "...The leaves are good to be put into pottage or brothes among other potherbes, for they scatter congealed blood, warme the stomacke, and helpe the dimness of the eies." (4)

"Clary, sometimes called '*Oculus Christi*', is one of the familiar potherbs of the Middle Ages. When 'put in pottage it will make the flesh tender,' claims a mediaeval herbal. In *The Goodman of Paris* it appears among the ingredients for herb omelette and in a recipe for 'green pickle for preserving fish.' Clary is included also among 'herbez for the coppe [cup]' in a fifteenth-century manuscript. A slightly later manuscript states: 'Some brewers of ale doe put it in their drink to make it more heady, fit to please drunkards.' The seeds were good for 'sickness of the eyes.'" (5)

Folklore/Astrology: "It is something hotter and drier than the garden clary is, yet nevertheless under the dominion of the *Moon*, as well as that..." (6)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Flowers, herb and leaves, both fresh and dry.

Medicinal: "Antispasmodic, balsamic, carminative, tonic, aromatic, astringent and pectoral. It has mostly been employed in disordered states of the digestion, as a stomachic, and has also proved useful in kidney diseases. The seeds when soaked in water for a few minutes form a thick mucilage, which is efficacious in removing particles of dust from the eye..." (7)

"Internally for vomiting, poor appetite, and menstrual complaints. Contraindicated during pregnancy. Externally for foreign bodies in the eye or skin (seeds), minor injuries, and ulcers." (8)

Culinary: "Clary wine made of the clary plant in flower is said to be delicious." (9)

"He [Culpepper] recommends a powder of the dry roots taken as snuff to relieve headache, and 'the fresh leaves, fried in butter, first dipped in a batter of flour, egges, and a little milke, serve as a dish to the table that is not unpleasant to any and exceedingly profitable.'" (10)

"Fresh young leaves are made into fritters. Flowers can be added to salads and made into tea." (11)

Economic: "...Clary is now grown commercially in Europe for its oil, which has an odor like lavender and is used as a fixative in perfume." (12)

"Young leaves are infused with elderflowers to give a muscatel bouquet to Rhine wines; also used to flavor vermouth, beers, and liqueurs. 'Muscatel oil' has an ambergris aroma and is used in soaps and cosmetics, and as a fixative in perfumery." (13)

Area of Origin: Southwest/Central Europe to Central Asia

Physical description: Hairy perennial or biennial with strongly aromatic, light green, deeply veined, broadly ovate, leaves, to 9" long, which have indented margins (14)

Plant type: Perennial or biennial

Height: 3'

Flower color: bicolored cream/lilac/pink/blue

Flowering period: June-August

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

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-9

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed sown in spring (species and annuals only)...may self-sow freely.

Sources

1. Dioscorides, p. 375
2. Gerard, p. 771-773
3. Culpepper, p. 34-35
4. Gerard, p. 771-773
5. Freeman, p. 5
6. Culpepper, p. 34-35
7. Grieve, p. 203
8. Bown, p. 356
9. Freeman, p. 5
10. Grieve, p. 203
11. Bown, p. 356
12. Freeman, p. 5
13. Bown, p. 356
14. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

1. Gerard's Herbal 1633 ed.
2. PSUMG 2012