

Common Name: **Saint John's Wort**

Genus: *Hypericum*

Species: *perforatum*

Family: Guttiferae

AKA: Other names known by



Historical Uses:

Medical: "...And ye fruit of this is available for Sciaticas, being drank with 2 Hemine of Hydromel. For it expells many cholerick excrements. But it must be given continually until that they be cured, & smeared on it is good for Ambusta." (1)

"St. Johns wort with his floures and seed boyled and drunken, provoketh urine, and is right good against the stone in the bladder, and stoppeht the laske. The leaves stamped are good to be layd upon burnings, scaldings, and all wounds; and also for rotten and filthy ulcers...." (2)

"It is a singular wound herb; boiled in wine and drank, it healeth inward hurts or bruises; made into an ointment, it opens obstructions, dissolves swellings, and closes up the lips of wounds. The decoction of the herb and flowers, especially of the seed, being drank in wine, with the juice of knot-grass, helpeth all manner of vomiting and spitting of blood, is good for those that are bitten or stung by any venomous creature, and for those that cannot make water..." (3)

"The *ypericon* plant, which is St. John's wort [is used] to stimulate urination and menstruation, for quartan fever, and for swelling and aching of the leg shanks." (4)

Household: "Provides a dyestuff and is used in cosmetics and as an ornamental." (5)

Folklore/Astrology: "It is under the celestial sign *Leo*, and the dominion of the *Sun*. It may be, if you meet a Papist, he will tell you, especially if he be a lawyer, that St. John made it over to him by a letter of attorney." (6)





“Warm and dry in the third degree, it is a herb of the Sun. Maidens used it to divine their future marriage partners, and it drove away demons and evil. When hung on houses it protected them from thunder and, if carried, warded off witchcraft. If held on Midsummer Eve, it would reveal witches at their revels, and other marvelous things. The devil sought to destroy its powers by piercing the leaves with a needle, but it retained

its ability to prevent hydrophobia and maniacal seizures. Should one step on the plant after sunset, a horse would rise from the ground and carry off the offender through the night, abandoning him at dawn wherever the journey might chance to end.” (7)

Other: “St. John’s wort [*hartenuuwe*] is cold and is good in the fodder of animals. It is, however, not beneficial to a person as medicine because it is uncultivated and neglected as an herb.” (8)

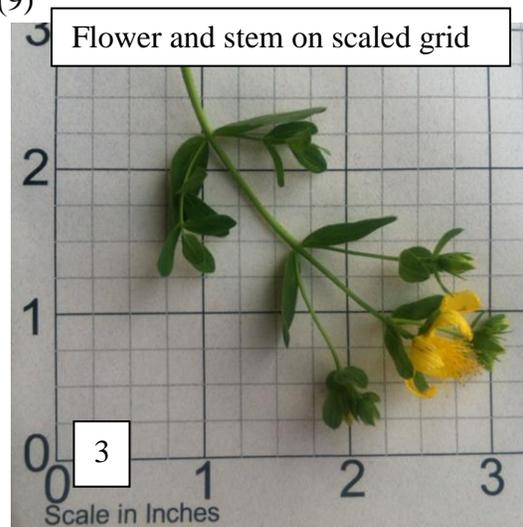
Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Whole plant

Medicinal: “Aromatic, astringent, resolvent, expectorant and nervine. Used in all pulmonary complaints, bladder troubles, in suppression of urine, dysentery, worms, diarrhea, hysteria and nervous depression, haemoptysis and other haemorrhages and jaundice. For children troubled with incontinence of urine at night an infusion or tea given before retiring will be found effectual...” (9)

“Internally for anxiety, mild to moderate depression, nervous tension, insomnia, enuresis (especially in children), menopausal disturbances, premenstrual syndrome, shingles, sciatica, fibrositis. Not given to patients suffering from severe depression.

Contraindicated with the following medications: oral contraceptives; warfarin; digoxin; anticonvulsants; theophylline; selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs); triptans; cyclosporine; and with various anti-virals prescribed for HIV patients. Externally for burns, bruises, injuries (especially deep or painful wounds involving nerve damage), sores, sciatica, neuralgia, cramps, sprains, and tennis elbow.” (10)



Area of Origin: Europe, West Asia

Physical description: Upright, clump-forming perennial, woody at the base, with blunt, oblong-elliptic to linear leaves.

Plant type: Perennial

Height: 2'-3'

Flower color: Yellow

Flowering period: May-August

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

Hardiness zone: USDA 4-8

Sun requirements: Full sun/partial shade

Propagation: By seed sown in autumn; by division in autumn or spring.

Cautions: Harmful if eaten. Skin allergen in sunlight. (11)

Sources:

1. Dioscorides, p. 396
2. Gerard, p. 540
3. Culpepper, p. 80
4. Van Arsdall, p. 135
5. Anderson, p.150-151
6. Culpepper, p. 80
7. Anderson, p.150-151
8. Von Bingen, p. 179
9. Grieve, p. 707-708
10. Bown, p. 240
11. Ibid

Illustrations/Images:

1. Gerard's Herbal 1633 ed.
2. PSUMG 2013
3. PSUMG 2013