

Common Name: **Cabbage**

Genus: *Brassica*

Species: *oleracea*

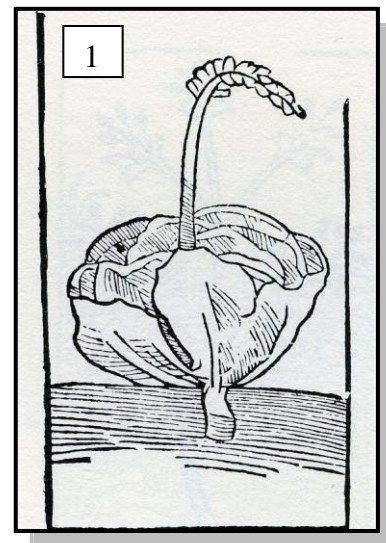
Family: Brassicaceae

AKA: Cawel, Caulis, Cole, Colewoort



Historical Uses:

Medical: “is good for the belly being eaten when it is but a little sod for being thoroughly sod it bindes the belly, & much more that which is twice sod and that which is sod in Lye . But the Summer Brassica is naught for the stomach, and sharper, but that which grows in Egypt is unedible for its bitterness. Being eaten, it helps such as are dull-sighted, and such as are troubled with tremblings; being taken after meate, it doth extinguish the maladies that comme of gluttony, and wine. But the young tendrell of it is better for the stomach, yet sharper, and more vreticall. Being condited in salt, it is bad for the stomach and troubling of the belly. The juice of it being raw, and swallowed with Iris, & Niter, doth mollify ye belly. And being dranck with wine, it helps such as are bitten of a viper. But with the meale of Foengraeck and vinegar, it helps such as have the gowte in their feet, and in their joints, and being applyed it is good for fowle and old ulcers. Being



itself poured in the nostrills , it doth purge the head. It expels the Menstrua being taken as a pessum with the meale of Lolium.”

“But with salt they breake Carbuncles roundabout. And they stay the following of the hayre off from ye head.” (1)



Round headed cabbage is the most common sort however other varieties are available

“For any swelling, take the shoots of the plant called *brassica siluatica* or cabbage, pound and mix them with aged lard, and make this as you would a poultice. Put this onto a thick linen cloth and lay it on the sore. For a pain in the side, take the same *brassica siluatica* plant, and put it on

the sore mixed as we just told you. For gout, take the same *brassica siluatica* plant, mixed the same way we said earlier. The longer the preparation stands, the more affect the healing will be.”(2)

“Cabbage, kale, and red cabbage are of a moist nature and cauliflower is somewhat colder than warm and is of a somewhat dry nature. They grow from the dampness of the dew and the air. And thereupon they have, as it were, powers and inner properties. Their dryness is somewhat useless and because of this they cause illness in people and wound weak intestines. But healthy people who have strong veins and who are not fat are able to eat them and overcome their powers. They are harmful, however, to fat people whose flesh abounds in juice. Eating these is almost as harmful to put them as it is to sick people. And they are harmful in relishes and with cooked meat since they increase bad humors rather than diminish them.” (3)

“The cabbage or coleworts boiled gently in broth, and eaten, do open the body, but the second decoction doth bind the body: the juice thereof drunken with wine, help of those that are bitten by an adder; and the decoction of the flowers bring us down women’s courses. Being taken with honey, and recover with hoarseness or loss of voice; and often eating of them, well boiled, help with those that are entering into a consumption: the pulp of the middle ribs of the colewort, boiled in almond milk, and made up into an electuary with honey, being taken often, is very profitable for those that are pury or short winded; being boiled twice, and an old cock boiled in the broth, and drunk, helpeth the pains and obstructions of the liver and spleen, and the stone in the kidneys; the juice boiled with honey, and dropped into the corner of the eyes, cleareth the sight, by consuming any film or cloud beginning to dim it: it also consumeth the canker growing there in. They are much commended being eaten before meat to keep one from surfeiting, has also from being drunk with too much wine, and quickly make a drunken man sober; for as they say, there is such an antipathy or enmity between the vine and the colewort, that one will die where the other groweth. The decoction of coleworts taketh away the pains and aches, and allayeth the swelling of the swollen or gouty legs and knees, wherein many gross and watery humours are fallen, the place being bathed therewith warm: it helpeth also old and the filthy sores being bathed therewith, and healeth all small scabs, pulses, and wheals, that break out in the skin; the ashes of colewort – stalk, mixed with old hogs grease, are very effectual to anointed the side of those that have long pains therein, or any other place pained with melancholy and windy humours.” (4)



An example of cone headed cabbage

“*Pliny* writeth , that the juyce mixed with wine, and dropped into the eares is a remedie against deafenesse. The seed, as *Galen* saith, driveth fourth wormes, taketh away freckles from the face, sun-burning, and what thing soever that need to be gently scoured or clensed away. They say that the broth wherein the herbe half beene sodden is marvellous good for the sinews and joynts, and likewise for Cankers in the eies called in Greeke *Carcinomata*, which cannot be healed by any other meanes, if they be washed therewith.” (5)

Culinary: Cabbages are extremely windy, whether you take them as meat or as medicine: but colewort-flowers are something more tolerable and the wholesomer food of the two.” (6)

Folklore/Astrology: “The moon challengeth the dominion of the herb.” (7)

“Cabbage is warm in the 1st degree, dry in the second, belongs to the moon, and must be planted in February, March, or April when the moon is waning. Farmers said that the grapevine and the cabbage were mutual enemies, which is why eating cabbage prevented intoxication. Elves and fairies ride about the night skies on its stalks. An ancient legend has it that the plant sprang from the tears of **Lycurgus, King of Thrace**, after he had destroyed some vines; he was bound to one by **Dionysus** as punishment. Another tale relates that **Christ** discovered a peasant stealing cabbages from his neighbor’s garden on Christmas Eve, and transformed him into the man in the moon, where he remains with his stolen goods. To dream of cutting cabbage is a sign of jealousy, and to dream of eating it foretells sickness in the family or loss of money.” (8)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: The head

Medicinal: No current use identified

Culinary: Food staple eaten raw, steamed, and pickled.

Other: The original family name of brassicas was Cruciferae, which derived from the flower petal pattern thought by medieval Europeans to resemble a crucifix. The word brassica derives from *bresic*, a Celtic word for cabbage. Many European and Asiatic names for cabbage are derived from the Celto-Slavic root *cap* or *kap*, meaning “head”. The late Middle English word cabbage derives from the word *caboché* (“head”), from the Picard dialect of Old French. (9)

Area of Origin: Probably Europe prior to 1000 BCE

Physical description: Green or purple biennial plant

Plant type: Biennial

Form: Generally rounded but some have conical forms

Height: 1-1.5 ft.

Flower color: Not ornamental

Soil type/requirements: Loamy, sandy

Ph: Neutral

Hardiness zone: 1-9 USDA

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By seed indoors, 6 to 8 weeks before last frost

Sources

1. Dioscorides, bk II, pg 159-160
2. Van Arsdall, pg 204
3. Von Bingen, pg 79 – 80
4. Culpeper, pg 91
5. Gerard, pg 311 – 317
6. Culpeper, pg 91
7. Ibid
8. Anderson, pg 56-57
9. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabbage>

Illustrations/Images:

1. Drach Herbal 1490
2. www.americalseedco.com/shop/golden-acre-y-r-63-days/
3. <https://gardenseedsmarket.com/conehead-cabbage-seeds-brassica-oleracea-var.-capitata.html>