

Skullcap

Family name: Mint

Family name: Lamiaceae/Labiatae

Latin Names: Scutellaria lateriflora

Common Names: Blue Skullcap, Helmet flower, Hoodwort, European Or greater skullcap, Quaker bonnet, Mad-Dog Skullcap, Mad weed, Virginia Skullcap.ⁱ

Notes of interest: The plant derives its name from the cap like appearance of the outer whorl of its small flowers.

Native American Names:

Related Species: *Scutellaria albida*, *Scutellaria alborosea*, *Scutellaria alpina*, *Scutellaria altissima*, *Scutellaria angustifolia*, *Scutellaria atriplicifolia*, *Scutellaria aurata*, *Scutellaria baicalensis*, *Scutellaria barbata*, *Scutellaria brittonii*, *Scutellaria californica*, *Scutellaria columnae*, *Scutellaria costaricana*, *Scutellaria formosana*, *Scutellaria gelericulata*, *Scutellaria hastifolia*, *Scutellaria hirta*, *Scutellaria incana*, *Scutellaria incarnata*, *Scutellaria indica*, *integrifolia*, *Scutellaria longifolia*, *Scutellaria minor*, *Scutellaria montana*, *Scutellaria orientalis*, *Scutellaria parvula*, *Scutellaria purpurascens*, *Scutellaria resinosa*, *Scutellaria rubicunda*, *Scutellaria scordiifolia*, *Scutellaria splendens*, *Scutellaria tuberosa*, *Scutellaria ventenatii*, and *Scutellaria violacea*.ⁱⁱ

Body System Affiliations:

1. Nervous system
2. Musculoskeletal system

Botanical Description:

Habit: North America and cultivated in Europe.

Size: A deciduous perennial that grows to 1.0 meters (3.3 feet) high by 0.5 meters (1.65 feet).

Arrangement: Opposite

Leaves: Petioles to 1.5cm long, with a few sparse appressed hairs, with an adaxial groove, often purple in strong sun. Blades ovate, acute to acuminate, serrate to crenate-serrate, truncate to rounded at the base, to +2cm broad, +2cm broad, +4cm long, mostly glabrous, light green below, dull green above. Veins impressed above, expressed below.ⁱⁱⁱ

Flowers: The small flowers range in color from blue to pink.

Fruit: The fruit is a globe to flattened-ovoid warty nut let.

Stem: The stem is erect and heavily branched.

Ecology:

Habitat: Wet areas, alluvial thickets, meadows, and swampy woods.

Range: Indigenous to North America, grows from Connecticut, south to Florida and Texas^{iv}.

Native Where: North America.

Places/Dates Observed/Description:

Western (European-American) Uses/Relationships:

Food: None

Medicine:

Part Used: Aerial parts.

Medicinal Actions: Tonic, Nervine, Antispasmodic, slightly Astringent.⁴

Indications: Nervous tension, exhaustion, spasms, hysteria¹, [238] pre-menstrual syndrome,(PMS), insomnia, stress, headaches, seizures, and epilepsy.⁵ [1596]

Harvest: Harvest in June from a three-to a four- year-old skullcap plant.

Preparations: Dried herb, liquid extract, and tincture.¹ [238]

Applications: Skullcap is generally sold commercially as a liquid extract, as a tea, in dried form, and capsules.

Pharmacy: “None found”

Cautions: Products containing skullcap should not be used in pregnancy or lactation.¹
[240]

Propagation:

Technique: Seed-sow in situ outdoors in late spring. If there is only a small quantity of seed it is better to sow it in a pot in a cold frame in early spring. When they are large enough prick the seedling out into individual pots and plant them out in the spring. Division in spring just before new growth begins. Very easy, larger divisions can be planted out direct into their permanent positions.⁶

Timing: Cultivating, early spring or during spring.

Harvest:

Plant part: The whole plant is medicinal and should be gathered while in flower, dried in the shade and kept in well-closed tin vessels, as it deteriorates rapidly from age and heat.⁴

Season of Harvest: Late summer

Personal Experience:

Food: “None found”

Materials/Technology:

Medicine: Planning to use.

Part used:

Desired Medical Actions:

Targeted Indications:

Other Notes of Interest:

Skullcap was once called mad-dog weed because of its use during the eighteenth century to treat rabies. In addition, Native Americans used skullcap as a sedative, tranquilizer, and digestive aid. Other cultures have used it as sedative and lower fevers⁵.

Cautions: Products containing skullcap should not be used in pregnancy or lactation.¹

Precautions: Before beginning herbal treatment. People should consult a physician, practitioner, or herbalist.

References:

i. Boon, Heather, BscPhm and Smith, Michael, MRPharmS, ND *50 Most Common Medicinal Herbs*,

ii. Wikipedia *The free Encyclopedia*. Online at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scutellaria> Visited 02/16/06

iii. Missouri Plants, Online at:
http://www.missouriplants.com/Blueopp/Scutellaria_lateriflora_page.html Visited 02/16/06

iv. Hutchesns, Alma R. *Indian Herbalogy of North America* (publish 1991).

5. *Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine*

6. Plants For the Future Edible, Medicinal and useful plants for a healthier world Online at:
<http://www.pfaf.org/database/plants.php?Scutellaria+lateriflora> Visited 02/17/06

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