

Did You Know?



Licorice, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

- Licorice is a herbaceous perennial with purple to lavender flowers, is in the legume family and hardy to zone 6.
- There are about 20 species, several of which are used regionally around the world. The most common are the European licorice, *G. glabra* and the Chinese licorice, *G. uralensis*
- The flavor is extracted from the root or stolons of the plant, which are at least 2 years old, and preferably 2-4 years old.
- The yellow flesh inside the brown roots contain the glycyrrhizin which is 50 times sweeter than cane sugar.
- Commercial licorice candy however is more often flavored with anise oil rather than the extract of the actual licorice plant.
- Licorice extracts are used to flavor baked goods, dairy products, sauces, chewing gum, beverages, medicine like cough syrup and throat lozenges, and tobacco for pipes.
- Licorice has been used medicinally by traditional healers in ancient Egypt and Syria. In fact, a large quantity was found in King Tutankhamun's tomb. It has also been used in Chinese medicine, Ayurveda and in North America with indigenous tribes and early settlers.
- Alexander the Great's troops carried licorice sticks to help with stamina for battles and long marches, as well as to ease their thirst.
- Modern day healers have used licorice for asthma, bronchitis, coughs, arthritis and peptic ulcers, among other ailments.
- Glycyrrhizin in licorice is an antiviral and anti-inflammatory.
- The root is dried prior to use and can be chewed straight. The dried roots can be used to make tinctures, teas and encapsulations.
- Licorice should not be used medicinally during pregnancy and qualified practitioners should be consulted regarding other conditions. It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use.