

Arctium minus

[Synonyms : *Arctium pubens*, *Arctium nemorosum* subsp. *pubens*, *Lappa glabra*, *Lappa minor*]
LESSER BURDOCK is a biennial. Native to temperate Europe it has prickly thistle-like heads of tiny green or purplish flowers that are often cottony and white when young.

It is also known as Bachelor's buttons, *Bardane* (French-Canadian), *Bardane mineure* (French), Beggar's buttons, *Boûillas* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Burdock, Button sourees, Cleavers, Clot-bur, Cockle-bur, Common burdock, Cuckold button, Cuckoo button, *Cyngaf Bychan* (Welsh), *Kleine Klette* (German), *Lampazo* (Spanish), *Liten kardborre* (Swedish), *Lopuch menší* (Czech), *Lopúch menší* (Slovak), Love leaves, *Ouothelle d'âne* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Smákardborre* (Swedish), Sticklebacks, Sticky bobs, Sticky Jack, Sticky Willy, and Velcro plant.

Warning – the burrs can entrap birds and small animals.

Minus means 'smaller or lesser'.

The amazing strength of the hooked prickles on its fruit (burs) is well illustrated in their ability to trap relatively small living creatures which no doubt as they struggle only make matters worse. Authorities have reported examples of this including one involving a stormy petrel, the smallest known web-footed sea-bird. Fortunately he was found and freed before attracting the attention of overflying gulls. In his efforts to get free however the burs had taken greater hold and horrifyingly by the time the bird was found he was being held by his feet, the sides of his body and his wings.

Burs from lesser burdock and other plants play a ritual role in Scotland. There the Burry Man parades through the streets of Queensferry, Edinburgh on the second Friday in August – a tradition associated with the Ferry Fair since 1687. He is completely covered in burrs (apart from his feet and the top of his head on which rests a hat dressed with flowers) and thus attired he visits houses where he receives gifts and greetings. This custom maintained in the past in other Scottish towns has died out elsewhere.

Records indicate that the Chippewa North American Indians used leaves for a head covering, and some Indian tribes such as the Oto used lesser burdock medicinally to treat internal chest inflammation. Apparently it was used by the Nanticoke, Penobscot and Micmac tribes in poultices applied to boils, and the Cherokee and Iroquois are believed to have used it similarly for swellings. The Hoh and Quileute Indians also used lesser burdock medicinally, and the Meskwaki employed it during childbirth. For some of the Chippewa it offered an answer to various stomach upsets and was also prescribed for coughs, while the Mohican chose it for treating colds. The Cowlitz seem to have turned to the plant for a remedy for whooping cough, and the Abnaki tribe prescribed it as a remedy for headaches and fever. It was a blood purifier for the Delaware, Potawatomi and Iroquois tribes and the Abnaki, Mohican, Iroquois and Delaware Indians are all said to have used it in the treatment of rheumatism.

Medicinally, the dried roots were used by European herbalists to encourage appetite and to treat fever.