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Galium aparine

[Synonyms : *Aparine vulgaris*, *Asterophyllum aparine*, *Crucianella purpurea*, *Galion aparinum*, *Galium aculeatissimum*, *Galium agreste* var. *echinospermum*, *Galium aparine* subsp. *agreste*, *Galium aparine* var. *aparine*, *Galium aparine* var. *echinospermum*, *Galium aparine* var. *fructibushispidis*, *Galium aparine* var. *intermedium*, *Galium aparine* var. *marinum*, *Galium aparine* var. *microphyllum*, *Galium aparine* var. *minor*, *Galium aparine* var. *pseudoaparine*, *Galium aparine* subsp. *spurium*, *Galium aparine* var. *subglabrum*, *Galium aparine* var. *vaillantii*, *Galium australe*, *Galium borbonicum* var. *makianum*, *Galium charoides*, *Galium chilense*, *Galium chonosense*, *Galium hispidum*, *Galium larecajense*, *Galium parviflorum*, *Galium pseudoaparine*, *Galium scaberrimum*, *Galium segetum*, *Galium spurium* var. *echinospermum*, *Galium spurium* var. *vaillantii*, *Galium tenerrimum*, *Galium uncinatum*, *Galium vaillantii*, *Rubia aparine*]

CLEAVERS is a semi-climbing annual. Native to northern temperate climates (including Europe and North America), it has tiny, white or greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as Air flower, Airif, *Aparine* (French, Italian), *Arzar* (Greek), Barweed, Bedstraw, Beggar's lice, Beggarweed, Birdlime, Blood-tongue, Bobby buttons, Burhead, Burweed, *Cappello dei tignosi* (Italian), Catch grass, Catch rogue, Catchweed, Catchweed bedstraw, Cheese rennet herb, Chicus, Clabber-grass, Cladden, Claggy Meggies, Clapped-pouch, Claver-grass, Clavers, Clayver grass, Cleaves, Cleaverwort, Cleggers, Cletheren, Cleverwort, Clidden, Clide, Cliders, Climb, Clinders, Clinging sweethearts, Cling rascal, Clitche buttons, Clites, Clivers, Clover grass, Cly, Clyden, Coachweed, *Coban süzegi* (Turkish), Cross clever, *Cyngaf* (Welsh), Devil's garter, Doctor's love, Donkeys, Eriffe, Erriffe, Everlasting friendship, *Gaillet accrochant* (French), Geckdor, Gentlemen's tormentors, *Gewöhnliches Kletten-Labkraut* (German), Gollenweed, Goosebill, Goose bumps, Goose cleavers, Goosegrass, Goose-shear, Goosetongue, Gooseweed, Gosling grass, Gosling scrotch, Gosling weed, *Grateron* (French), *Gratteron* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Grip, Gripgrass, Hair eye, Hairiff, Harif, Haritch, Harris's bullets, Harvest lice, *Harxajja* (Maltese), Hayriffe, Hayruff, Hedgeburs, Hedgeheriff, Hedgehogs, *Hèrbe à tchilieuvre* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Herif, Heriff, Huggy-me-close, Jack-at-the-hedge, Jack-run-the-dyke, *Kierumatara* (Finnish), Kisses, Kiss-me-quick, *Klebenabkraut* (German), *Klebkraut* (German), *Kletten-Labkraut* (German), Lizzie-run-the-hedge, *Llau'r Offeriad* (Welsh), *Llysiaúr Hidl* (Welsh), Love, Love-man, Lover's kisses, Lover's knots, Milksweet, Mutton chops, Pigtail, Pin-burr, Poor robin, Rabbie-rinnie-hedge, Reclining bedstraw, Robin-round-the-hedge, Robin-run-in-the-grass, Robin-run-the-hedge, Robin-run-the-dyke, Robin-run-up-dyke, Rob-run-up-dyke, Savoyan-scratchgrass, Scarthgrass, Scratch grass, Scratchweed, Scratweed, Scurvy-grass, Snares, *Snärjgrås* (Swedish), *Snärjmåra* (Swedish), Soldier's buttons, Spring cleavers, Stick-a-back, Stick-buttons, Stick-donkey, Stickleback, Stickyback, Sticky Billy, Sticky bobs, Sticky buds, Sticky grass, Sticky William, Sticky-Willie, Sticky weed, *Svízel přítula* (Czech), Sweethearts, Tether-grass, Tongue-bluiders, Traveller's comfort, Traveller's ease, Turkey grass, Turkey's food, *Vitblommig snärjmåra* (Swedish), Wild hedgebur, and Willy-run-the-hedge.

A strong decoction of the juice will make milk coagulate.

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Warning – some authorities believe that the plant should not be taken internally by diabetic sufferers.

Aparine is a Greek name for cleavers and also an earlier name for the *Galium* genus.

The common name Goosegrass arose through its reputation as food for geese and Cleavers and many of the other names came about because the plant clings to anything that brushes past it whether animal or human in order to disperse its seeds.

It is interesting to note that the 1st Century Greek physician, Dioscorides, wrote of the shepherds of that time using the stems to make a rough sieve and that sixteen centuries later Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), the renowned Swedish naturalist and physician, recorded that in Swedish country areas a similar method was being used to strain milk. On the other hand cleavers must have been considered a nuisance by the shepherd when its burrs got tangled in a sheep's fleece as this would have reduced the quality of the wool.

Cosmetically the plant has been used to reduce freckles.

Cleavers roots yield a red dye. Birds that eat the plant's roots have their bones tinged with the colour.

Some authorities, particularly in Sweden and Ireland, claim that the seeds (which only have to be dried and slightly roasted) are an excellent substitute for coffee and give a coffee-like taste.

Cleavers has been fed to young poultry and game, especially geese, turkeys and pheasants.

The plant was familiar to North American Indian tribes who mainly viewed it as a source of medicine – although the Nitinaht tribe are said to have used it as a hair wash which would make the hair grow long, and women who were successful in love in the Cowlitz tribe were said to have bathed in a plant infusion of cleavers.

Gosiute Indians used the plant in veterinary medicine for treating their horses.

It was used by the Penobscot Indians, Micmac tribe and some of the Chippewa for treating various kidney problems, and the first two tribes also used it to stem internal bleeding and treat venereal diseases. Some of the Chippewa prescribed it for fluid retention and urinary ailments generally, and the Meskwaki Indians chose it when it was necessary to cause vomiting. It provided a laxative for the Cherokee Indians and was also used as a tonic by the Penobscot tribe. Chippewa Indians turned to it for some skin problems and the Iroquois used it specifically as a remedy for poison ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*.

Medicinally, it has been used in the past to treat jaundice, colds, fevers and kidney and bladder complaints. An infusion of the dried plant has also been used for treating insomnia and poultices or ointments have been applied to burns, sores and blisters. So far its past reputation for having anti-cancerous properties has not been confirmed, but it can be used today for treating some glandular disorders, skin diseases and cystitis. It is also used in homoeopathic treatments.

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