

Did You Know?



Licorice, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

- Licorice is a herbaceous perennial in the legume family with purple to lavender flowers and is 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*.
- Common names include licorice, licorice root, liquorice, sweet root, gan cao, gan zao, and Chinese licorice.
- 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. Glycyrrhizin is also an antiviral and anti-inflammatory.
- 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.
- The root is dried prior to use and can be chewed straight. The dried roots can be used to make tinctures, teas and encapsulations.
- Modern day healers have used licorice for asthma, bronchitis, coughs, arthritis, halitosis, peptic ulcers, canker sores, and topically for skin conditions. Yet, while it considered safe in food, a number of contraindications have been noted for a variety of health conditions and medications.
- 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.
- Note, do not confuse *Glycyrrhiza glabra* with other plants that use licorice as a common name as well, like *Helichrysum petiolare* spp. or anise, *Pimpinella anisum*.

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