

Cleavers, Bedstraw

(*Galium aparine*)

Madder Family – Rubiaceae

The arrival of spring brings with it a sudden burst of growth from the plant world. A common herb that catches your attention is cleavers, also known as bedstraw, an introduced annual. The herb literally reaches out and grabs onto you as you pass by. Leaves and stems are both covered in small, fibrous hairs with tiny hooks on the end, enabling it to stick to clothing and other objects. Cleavers is also one of the few wild greens that has leaves in whorls with six to eight slender leaves forming a circle around the square stem. Tiny, white flowers with four petals appear in the spring in the leaf axils followed by tiny, bristly fruits.

Leaves and stems of cleavers are both edible and medicinal. The chopped leaves and stems can be made into a tea or cooked as greens. Fruits have also been used by roasting them and making a coffee-like beverage.

Cleavers is best used fresh. Chopping them in a juicer, blender, or grinder is the easiest way to prepare them. They can then be tintured using alcohol or vinegar. Cleavers vinegar can be added to salads or as a marinade for vegetables.

Cleavers has a long history of use as a medicinal herb. It contains plant acids, coumarins, iridoids, and tannins (Hoffman, 2003). As a diuretic it is useful for bladder and kidney inflammation and edema. Cleavers is a cooling herb and is useful for hot, stagnant conditions. As a juice or poultice, it can be used for burns, including sunburns. Cleavers moves lymph and is therefore beneficial for swollen lymph glands, including tonsils, armpits, breasts, and groin (Herbs with Rosalee).

References:

Herbs with Rosalee: <https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/cleavers-herb.html>.

Hoffman, D. (2003). *Medical herbalism: The science and practice of herbal medicine*. Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press.



Green Smoothie with Cleavers

a tasty and nourishing spring tonic

- 2 cups chopped cleavers
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 cup pineapple or orange juice
- 1 carrot

Place the herbs in a blender and blend until smooth. Serve immediately.