

Burdock



Illustration: Ann Shore

Scientific name: *Arctium Lappa*

Other names: Grote klit, Grote klis, Große Klette, Bardana, Lappolone, Bardane.

Plant family: Asteraceae

Plant type: Biennial

Appearance: Very large plant. 2m+ tall eventually. Elongated-heart shaped leaves with wavy edges. Thistle-like flowers form on tall stem during 2nd year and mature to burr heads. First year, low growing large leaves, no flowers. Downy leaf and stem surfaces. Very deep roots!

Growing conditions: Parkland edges, woodland, sun, semi neglected spots. Needs undisturbed time to mature. Deep soil.

Toxic look-alike:

Giant butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*, *P. japonicus*). Have kidney shaped leaves, near water usually. Contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

Properties

Adaptogen, anti-fungal, alterative, hepatic, lymphatic, diaphoretic, diuretic, laxative, hypoglycemic, bitter, antibiotic, anti-tumor.

Medicinal Uses

Extensively used as a cleanser and tonic for many body systems. Especially known for supporting liver and kidneys thus used for arthritis, gout, rheumatism, skin ailments such as acne, psoriasis, eczema, boils, styes. Cystitis, anemia, to lower blood sugar or blood cholesterol. Hair oil. Also traditional use for some cancers and for supporting those weakened by disease. Different parts of the plant are used for different remedies.

Contraindications

Those who have sensitive digestive systems, blood thinning issues or pregnancy.

Foraging Notes

Emerges from roots or seeds, late spring. Easy to find in early summer due to massive leaves. Grows in family groups of mixed 1st and 2nd year plants.

Harvest roots (if appropriate) well before flowers form, ideally in autumn of 1st year. Peel roots, the inside tastes slightly sweet, pleasant. Extensively used in Japanese cuisine. Dry thin slices to preserve for cooking. Leaves taste very bitter, consume only sparingly. Leaf stems - peel, slice and cook for 3 minutes in water - mild. Seeds - collect early autumn.

Dandelion and Burdock - English traditional tonic cordial. Urban Herbology version - Burdock leaf stem or leaf infused with dandelion flowers in honey or agave.