

ANOTHER
HERB HERBERT
FACT SHEET

SPECIAL INTEREST HERBS



ST JOHN'S WORT

Hardy Perennial
Hypericum perforatum
Family: Guttiferae



HISTORY

St John's Wort has a long history predating Christianity and was associated with magical attributes since the ancient Greeks gave it the name *hypericon* "above an icon". Sprigs of the plant were hung over images of family members to ward off evil during the Northern Midsummer Festival. Part of its folklore also came about due to the 'bleeding' of a red pigment, *hypericine*, which, when the yellow flowers were crushed, turned it blood red. This was then associated with St John the Baptist. It is believed the flowers open fully on his birthday, June 24 and red oil would bleed from its leaf glands on the day he was beheaded. It became known as *herba Sancti Ioannis*, and later named St John's Wort.

Although St John's Wort is no longer used for religion and witchcraft today, it does have effective medical properties and is still widely used in European folk medicine.



DESCRIPTION

A hardy perennial, St John's Wort is an upright plant that bears bright yellow flowers in spring/summer. The

leaves have a slight odour like turpentine and when held up to the light have tiny transparent oil

glands that look like holes. It grows to a height of 30-60 cm (12-24 in) in full sun.



USES

Medicinally, the Plant is used as a potent anti depressant, for anxiety, nervous tension and is being used in drug trial against acquired immune deficiency syndrome. It also has antibacterial and astringent properties for the treatment of wounds and skin disorders and extracts are used in cosmetics. It is a popular herb used in homoeopathy. A red dye is also produced from the plant.



CULTIVATION

St John's Wort is a common weed that grows in the wild. It can be spread from runners or grown from seed or cuttings. It is easy to control and can easily be pulled up to thin out.



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