

Comfrey—*Symphytum peregrinum* L.¹

James M. Stephens²

Cultivated comfrey is also called Russian comfrey, healing herb, blackwort, bruisewort, wallwort, and gum plant. It is a hardy, herbaceous, perennial that grows from 3 to 4 feet high. Leaves are 5-inches wide by 12-inches long, and are covered on the top surface by many short hairy bristles (mustard-like).

The leaves appear to be stacked one upon the other, being larger at the base of the plant than near the top to form a sort of large clump. Comfrey has an oblong, fleshy, perennial root, black on the outside and whitish within, containing a clammy, tasteless juice. Drooping bellflowers are white, purple, or pale yellow.



Figure 1. Comfrey
Credits: James M. Stephens

Culture

Comfrey does well in Florida gardens, where it grows year round and tolerates cold weather. Since it is a perennial, cut it back yearly in January or February to reduce the thatch and encourage new succulent leaf growth. Start comfrey any time of the year, although spring is best, using root or crown cuttings that are 2 to 6 inches long. Place them 2 to 4 inches deep in furrows spaced 3 feet apart.

Use

Comfrey may be eaten as a cooking green, used as an herb, or planted as an ornamental. Many medical remedies have been proclaimed for this plant, and its advocates associate an assortment of health benefits with it.

1. This document is HS587, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 1994. Revised September 2015. Reviewed October 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. James M. Stephens, professor emeritus, Horticultural Sciences Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.