

Common Name: Wood-sorrel

Scientific Name: *Oxalis acetosella*

Family: *Oxalidaceae*

Alternative Names: Hallelujah, Bread-and-cheese, Butter and Eggs, Cuckoo's Meat, Fairy Bells, Fox's Meat, God Almighty's Bread –and-cheese, Good Luck, Green Sauce, Green Sob, King Finger, Laverocks, Salt Cellar, Sour Dab, Whitsun Flower, Wild Shamrock.

Range: Throughout British Isles

Habitat: Shady dry woodland avoids wet and very chalky soil

Key Identification Features: Native perennial, 5-10cm tall with long pinkish stem. Trifoliate leaf with heart shaped leaflets, bright green in spring darkening through the summer, sometimes purplish below. Leaflets drooping or folded down at night and when raining. Flowers in April, five white petals with purple veins. Fruit is a 5 angled capsule 3-4mm long.

Confusion Species: White Clover has similar trifoliate leaf but leaflets are round rather than heart shaped and often have white line across them. Grows more in grassland and doesn't have purple stem. There are several introduced species of Oxalis with either yellow or pink flowers all are edible.

Edible Uses: The leaves and flowers can be eaten raw in salads including fruit salads. If gathered in quantity they can be used to make sorrel sauces and soups, they can be crushed with sugar and mixed with water to make a lemonade like drink. Avoid excessive consumption as they contain significant amounts of oxalic acid.

Medicinal Uses: Contains Vitamin C, Beta-carotene, mucilage and oxalic acid. They are supposedly diuretic and analgesic. They can counteract arteriosclerosis, alleviate fever and aid menstrual flow as well as treating scurvy. The bruised fresh leaves were applied to cuts and bruises and an infusion of the leaves used as a laxative.

Other Uses: Native Americans supposedly fed the roots of the plant to their horses to make them run faster.





References:

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Launert, Edmund. *The Country Life Guide to Edible and Medicinal Plants of Britain and Northern Europe* (Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1981)

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Rose, Francis. *The Wild Flower Key* (Frederick Warne, 1981)