

## Description

**Lovage**  
**Levisticum Officinale**  
**Family: Apiaceae**

Lovage is a perennial that resembles Angelica or celery in appearance. It grows a taproot up to 15cm long and an erect, hollow, round 1-2cm-thick stem which grows up to 2m tall. The leaves are divided into wedge-like segments similar to celery; they're bright green with a strong odour when bruised. The stem branches off several times and each division produces an umbel of several small, yellow flowers similar to the fennel but the umbel forms a ball rather than an umbrella. A ribbed brown seed emerges from each flower.

## Growing Tips

Lovage likes sun but also does well in semi-shade. Because it spreads, choose a spot with enough space. It likes rich, moist but light soil and can be spread by root division. It dies down in winter but will re-grow the following season. For best results plant 30cm apart in early spring.

## Parts Used

Leaves, seeds, roots

## Uses

The leaves, seeds and roots are used for culinary purposes - with their celery-like savoury taste it provides good flavour to soups, stews or casseroles and also to white sauces. A leaf rubbed around a salad bowl before tossing in the greens enriches the dish's flavour. The root can be used like carrot. The stems can be steamed and eaten as a vegetable. Be mindful not to use too much of this herb as it can be overpowering. The young stems are used like those of Angelica, by caramelizing with sugar and adding it to confectionery. The seeds are used in the same way as Dill and Fennel in bread, meat preserves and pickles in Europe. Its medicinal value comes from the seed - mainly as a digestive aid, and from the root - to relieve water retention, to detoxify, dispel odours and relieve rheumatism. Though not to be dismissed in its medicinal value, it has largely been superseded by stronger more prominent herbs such as Angelica, Yarrow and Tansy.

## Origin & History

Lovage originates in the Mediterranean and Southern European region and is now naturalized in most continents. The Ancient Greeks used to chew the seeds to avoid flatulence and bloating, and the Romans passed on this knowledge. It was used as an aphrodisiac by witches in old Europe. The name derived from its earlier description 'ligusticum', (now named Scots Lovage) which stemmed from the region Liguria where the herb grew and was used extensively. In the Middle Ages Lovage leaves were placed on the soles of travelers to dispel odours.

In Holland the plant is called 'Maggi Plant' because the flavour it adds resembles that of the commercially available condiment by the same name.

