

## Description

**Valerian**  
**Valeriana Officinalis**  
**Family: Valerianaceae**

Valerian is a perennial plant with a taproot that grows up to 1.5m tall. It produces mild green leaves about 20cm long with a strong mid rib and small leaflets growing from it in five to eight pairs with a centre leaflet forming the tip of the leaf. A group of clustered, pale pink funnel-shaped flowers forms atop a hollow, grooved stem. The root smells like ancient leather and is attractive to rodents

## Growing Tips

Valerian grows easily in sun or shade as long as its roots are kept cool and moist. The root can be divided in autumn or spring but be aware of its attraction to mice and rats.

## Parts Used

Root

## Uses

The root is used dried as a powder, tea or tincture, mainly for its sedative, anti-spasmodic, hypotensive anxiolytic, and overall calming effect. It is available commercially in standardized preparations as a natural sleep aid.

## Origin & History

Valerian is native to Europe and Western Asia and is now naturalized in North America. The amino acid Valine has its name as a reference to Valerian. In the 16th century an essential oil was extracted from the flower and used as perfume.

The powder of the root is now used in musky perfumes. During the first and second World War Valerian tincture was administered to soldiers suffering from shell shock.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin is said to have carried a piece of Valerian root so the children would follow him.

