**RUE**

*Ruta graveolens*  
[ROO-tuh grav-ee-OH-lens]

**Family:** Rutaceae

**Names:** ruta, bashoush, German rue, Garden rue, Rewe, Hreow, Herbygrass, Herb of Grace, Mother of the herbs; Ruta, Ruta Ostrowonna (Polish); Rue (French); Gartenraute, Raute (German); Ruda (Spanish); sink-in (Mayan); Pighanos, Apighanos (Greek)

**Description:** Small, rounded bush with a height of 3 feet and a width of 2 feet. The flowers are yellow with scooplike flowers and the leaves are spadelike, up to ¼ inch long, blue-gray, with a powerful smell. The fruit are globular seedpods, with deep indentations. They resemble a miniature green orange, to which rue is related. It blooms June to September.

**Cultivation:** Perennial to Zone 4. It germinates in 10-14 days. Space 1 foot apart. Soil should be well drained (wet soil during a cold winter can kill it) with a pH of 6-8. Full sun or partial shade though the less sun the more straggly. Gather before it comes into flower.

**Constituents:** Essential oil includes methyl-n-nonyl ketone (starting material for valuable perfume chemicals), limone, cineole; alkaloids (fagarine, arborinine, arboine, graveoline, graveolinine, gamma-fagarine); coumarins (bergapten, xanthotoxin, psoralen, rutamarin, umbelliferone); flavonoids (quercitin, rutin (food supplement Vitamin P))

**Properties:** antitoxic, antitussive, antiseptic, antispasmodic, diuretic, emmenagogue, insecticidal, nervine, rubefacient, stimulant, tonic, vermifuge

**Energetics:** Bitter, pungent, warm

**Meridians/Organs affected:** liver, spleen

**History:** The name rue comes from the Greek *rhysethai*, to save or help. Roman painters ate rue in an effort to preserve their eyesight. It was used extensively as an antidote to poison, particularly snake bites. The Druids would strew it in their homes and places of worship to ward off the devil and evil spirits. The Latin name means “strong smell.” It was the herb used by John Milton’s angel, along with eyebright to purge Adam’s sight in *Paradise Lost*. The Talmud, describes rue as a medicine so important to the people that no tithe was imposed on it. Rue was the main ingredient in Mithridate’s famous poison antidotes. Rue and garlic were included in the “Vinegar of the Four Thieves” during the plague. Rue stems were tied into bouquets of rosemary and southernwood to protect judges from typhoid. It was called the “Herb of Grace” and the “Herb of Repentance.” And the dew water that collects in the cuplike flowers was the original...
holy water used for high mass. It was referred to in Shakespeare’s Richard II. It was used as an ingredient in herb wine during the Middle Ages and is still used in Spain and southern Italy to give aroma to brandy.

Since the Greeks, the consumption of rue has known to be dangerous to pregnant women and it has traditionally been employed as an abortifacient in folk medicine. However it is also highly toxic and excessive consumption can result in vomiting, delirium and even death.

**Medicinal Uses:** Rue was once an officially recognized treatment for hypertension, diabetes, and allergic reactions. Its primary reputation is that of an antispasmodic for smooth muscles. The action is attributed to the alkaloids arborine and arborinine, as well as to the coumarin rutamarin and components of the essential oil. It is still a popular folk medicine in countries like Mexico, Lebanon, Iran, India and China. In traditional Chinese medicine, the leaves are applied to reduce inflammation from snakebites, insect bites, strains and sprains. The rutin it contains strengthens fragile blood vessels and helps alleviate varicose veins, although using the whole plant has been found to work better. Both an eyewash and a tea are suggested for soothing tired eyes and headaches from eyestrain, and the tea is also used to decrease the pain and inflammation of an earache. Rue increases blood flow to the digestive tract, relaxes muscles and calms heart palpitations, nervous indigestion and colic. The Unami medicine of India recommends rue not only to treat various physical conditions, but to improve mental clarity and as an aphrodisiac—although the Polish consider it an aphrodisiac.

Rue is a well-known cold and menstrual cramp remedy in Latin America, where an ointment is also applied for gout and rheumatic pains, and strong tea compresses are placed on the chest for bronchitis. The infusion benefits coughs, cramp and colic. The leaves are used in poultices and salves to relieve sciatica, gout and rheumatic pains. Fresh leaves are placed on the temples to relieve headache.

Fomentations of the tea are placed on the chest to help bronchitis. The juice or oil is placed in the ear to relieve earaches. Smoke from a cigarette of the leaves also is blown into the ears to relieve pain. The tea is drunk to treat ringing in the ears. In Latin America, Rue is seldom boiled; generally 9 small branches are squeezed into a glass of water, strained and drunk twice daily before meals for stomach cramps, late menses, to kill intestinal worms, to prevent attacks of epilepsy, to stop vomiting, and to calm the nerves. To ease childbirth and aid contractions, sip rue water during delivery. Soak rue leaves in alcohol to use as a liniment on sore muscles, backache, headache, muscle spasms, and to massage those suffering from fever, exhaustion or fainting spells.

It is used to kill intestinal parasites, and Arabs add it to suspect water to counteract any ill effects.

A strong infusion made by pouring a little boiling water on dried or fresh rue leaves can be dabbed on insect bites to bring relief. **Combinations:**

**Regulation of periods: false unicorn root and life root**

RUE TEA: 1 tsp rue leaves, 1 Tbsp honey, 1 cup boiling water. Infuse the leaves in the boiling water for 5 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey. It’s regarded as a stimulant and anti-spasmodic.

**PREPARATIONS:** Do not take rue before meals or use in large doses. The tincture can be taken in amounts of 5-20 drops once a day, or rue can be infused and taken in dosages of ½ cup daily. Do not boil rue. The fresh juice can be mixed with honey as a preservative and applied to the eyes (one drop, 2 or 3 times a day) to sharpen vision and relieve overstrained eyes. Mixed with hot water, the honey-rue combination can be used as a gargle or a tea for colds, flu and stomach disorders. Use only one teaspoon of the fresh juice over the period of one day.

**FOR PETS:** garlic, rosemary and rue infused in olive oil work together at killing ear mites in dogs and cats.
Homeopathy: *Ruta graveolens* is used for eyestrain, strained tendons, sprains (after arnica has been used), bruised bones, constipation, colon cancer, pain in the thighs upon stretching and headache that follows eyestrain. The tincture diluted with ten parts water can be used as a lotion for the eyes.

Toxicity: Some people experience dermatitis from touching rue. It should not be taken during pregnancy since it is a uterine stimulant. The coumarins may cause photosensitivity; large dosages can be poisonous.

Aromatherapy:
EXTRACTION: essential oil by steam distillation from the fresh herb.
CHARACTERISTICS: a yellow or orange viscous mass that generally solidifies at room temperature, with a sharp, herbaceous-fruity acrid odor. The winter rue does not solidify at room temperature

Ritual Uses: Gender: Hot; Planet: Sun; Element: Fire; Dieties: Diana, Aradia; Basic Powers: protection, intellectual, exorcism, purification. Considered an antidote to spells and ill wishes, heightening mental power and protection and aiding positive focus during trance. Rue encourages corrections that facilitate the transformation of karma. It’s an important herb of purification and rue water is sprinkled around a ritual site or a branch of rue is used to sprinkle salt water. It brings protection and clears negativity. The herb was worn to guard against the plague and is now added to health sachets and those designed to keep illness away. Smell the fresh crushed herb to instantly clear the mind of envious thoughts, unrequited love, and egotism. The herb is used to still a painful love. Add to exorcism incenses and purification sachets. Used in spells of inertia, to get something moving.

Hang rue in a house with a newborn so as to offer magical and spiritual protection

Other Uses: The seedpods are used in dried wreaths. Rue water was once sprinkled around the house to repel insects, especially fleas.

*Dye: 1 pot rue*
2 tsp chrome
4 gal water
1 lb wool

Boil the leaves and stem of the rue in water for 1 hour. Strain out the plant material and add enough water to make up the 4 gallons. Dissolve the chrome in the hot dye ooze. Heat the wool so that there will be no sudden temperature change to course the wool to shrink and add it to the dye ooze. Simmer it for ¾ hour, covered. Cool and rinse until the water runs clear. Color: greenish yellow…with alum: soft yellow

Culinary Uses: Despite its pungency, rue is added to Italian salads in very small amounts. It has a bitter flavor suggestive of black pepper. Ethiopians prepare a sharp sauce of cayenne and rue, make rue cheese and mix it with their coffee-leaf beverage. In the U.S., the oil is a commercial flavoring in some baked goods, candies, and desserts. The leaves have been used as a flavoring component of pickles. Rue is found in an Italian liqueur called *grappa con ruta* which may have its origins in a rue-flavored honey mead mentioned by Pliny and later known as “sack.” In some parts of Scotland, it is sometimes used sparingly on sandwiches.

Recipes:
**Roast Pheasant with Rue**
1 large pheasant, dressed plus giblets
2 rashers bacon
spring fresh thyme of ½ tsp dried
1 Tbsp flour
3 fresh or 2 dried and crushed leaves rue

   Wash and dry the bird thoroughly and place in roasting pan with bacon covering the breast to prevent it drying out. Sprinkle with chopped thyme and roast for 30 minutes at 400F. Take bird from oven and remove bacon. Dredge with flour, baste, sprinkle with rue and return to oven for 30 minutes until crisp and
brown use giblets for gravy and serve with bread sauce. (The Illustrated Book of Herbs)

**Cottage Cheese with Rue**

5 oz carton cottage cheese  
1 Tbsp double cream  
pinch salt  
pinch dried rue  

Soften the cheese with the cream and stir in the salt and rue. For added flavor prepare the day before use and refrigerate. Serve on rye bread or toast as a snack. (The Illustrated Book of Herbs).

**Athenian Cabbage**

1 small white cabbage, finely sliced, rinsed, and drained  
2 Tbs chopped cilantro  
1 Tbs chopped fresh rue  
1 pinch asafoetida powder  
3 Tbs honey  
2 Tbs red wine vinegar  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  

Cabbage should be sliced with the sharpest possible iron blade, then washed, drained, and chopped with plenty of coriander and rue. Then sprinkle with honey vinegar and add just a little bit of silphium. Combine the cabbage, coriander, rue, and asafoetida in a mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and toss to combine. Serve at room temperature. Serves 4 to 6.

**English Sack**

4 sprigs rue  
1 handful fennel root  
1 gallon water  
3 lbs honey  

Boil the rue and fennel in the water for 30 minutes, strain, and add the honey. Boil for a further 2 hours, skimming from time to time, before emptying the liquid into a cask. Allow the sack to ferment for 1 year before drawing off and bottling. (Mastering Herbalism)

**References:**


**Resources:**

Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com plants

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