

Ferula

Ferula (from Latin *ferula*, 'rod') is a genus of about 220 species of flowering plants in the family *Apiaceae*, native to the Mediterranean region east to central Asia, mostly growing in arid climates. They are herbaceous perennial plants growing to 1–4 m tall, with stout, hollow, somewhat succulent stems. The leaves are tripinnate or even more finely divided, with a stout basal sheath clasping the stem. The basal sheaths of *Ferula oopoda* are up to six inches (15 cm) long and form a cup holding about a cup of rainwater,[2] possibly to draw pollinators in an arid land. The flowers are usually yellow, rarely white, produced in large umbels. Many plants of this genus, especially *F. communis*, are referred to as "giant fennel," although they are not fennel in the strict sense.[3][4]

The Roman spice laser or *laserpicium* probably came from a species of *Ferula*, either an extinct one or *Ferula tingitana*, though other identities have been suggested.

The gummy resin of many species of *Ferula* is used for various purposes:

The Romans called the hollow light rod made from this plant a *ferula* (compare also *fasces*, judicial birches). Such rods were used for walking sticks, splints, for stirring boiling liquids, and for corporal punishment.[citation needed]

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