

Salvia sclarea

Salvia sclarea, the clary or clary sage (clary deriving from Middle English clarie, from Anglo-Norman sclaree, from Late or Medieval Latin sclaria), is a biennial or short-lived herbaceous perennial in the genus Salvia.[1] It is native to the northern Mediterranean Basin, along with some areas in north Africa and Central Asia.[citation needed] The plant has a lengthy history as an herb, and is currently grown for its essential oil.[2]

Salvia sclarea reaches 3 to 4 ft (0.91 to 1.22 m) in height, with thick square stems that are covered in hairs. The leaves are approximately 1 ft (0.30 m) long at the base, .5 ft (0.15 m) long higher on the plant. The upper leaf surface is rugose, and covered with glandular hairs. The flowers are in verticils, with 2-6 flowers in each verticil, and are held in large colorful bracts that range in color from pale mauve to lilac or white to pink with a pink mark on the edge. The lilac or pale blue corolla is approximately 1 in (2.5 cm), with the lips held wide open.[2] The cultivar S. sclarea 'Turkestanica' bears pink stems, petiolate leaves, and white, pink-flecked blossoms on spikes to 30 inches (76 cm) tall.[3]

Descriptions of medicinal use of the plant goes back to the writings of Theophrastus (4th century BCE), Dioscorides (1st century CE), and Pliny the Elder (1st century CE).[4]

Clary seeds have a mucilaginous coat, which is why some old herbals recommended placing a seed into the eye of someone with a foreign object in it so that it could adhere to the object and make it easy to remove. This practice is noted by Nicholas Culpeper in his Complete Herbal (1653), who referred to the plant as "clear-eye".[5]

It was used as an ingredient in wine and beer production. In 16th-century Germany elderflower infused clary was added to Rhine wines to make a more potent varietal known as Muscatel.[6]

The distilled essential oil is used widely in perfumes and as a muscatel flavoring for vermouths, wines, and liqueurs.[2] It is also used in aromatherapy.[7]

In the United States, large scale production is concentrated in northeastern North Carolina in the counties surrounding Bertie County.[8]

It has been considered that sclareol contained in clary sage oil has estrogen-like effects and is effective for amenorrhea, menstrual irregularities, and hot flashes during menopause.

It has been confirmed in mice that sclareol has a small molecular weight and is absorbed transdermally[9]. In an experiment in which sclareol was dissolved in jojoba oil and applied to mice, (1) it was detected in the blood 30 minutes after application and (2) higher concentrations of sclareol were detected in the liver but did not cause liver dysfunction.

Salvia sclarea essential oil

Plants of Salvia sclarea

Plant of Salvia sclarea

Clusters of clary flowers

Close-up

Close-up

Leaves

