

MUGWORT, WESTERN



Artemisia ludoviciana

[ar-te-MIZ-ee-uh loo-doh-vik-ee-AH-nuh]
(*syn Artemisia purshiana*)

Family: Compositae

Names: western mugwort, Louisiana sagebrush, lobed cudweed, cudweed, pasture sage, Estafiate, Iztauhyatl, Altamiza, Ajenjo del Pais, Azumate, Estafiate, Louisiana Sagewort, White Sagebrush

Description: White sage is a perennial from rhizomes (underground stems that root from the nodes). This aromatic plant may be over 3 feet tall. Stems and leaves are usually white from

the presence of fine hairs. The lance-shaped leaves are mostly about 1-3 inches long and can be entire, irregularly toothed, or lobed. Hundreds of tiny yellowish flower heads form on the upper branches. Fruits are tiny achenes with no bristles. It is hardy to zone 5. It is in flower from August to October, and the seeds ripen from September to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite and are pollinated by the wind.

Cultivation: Drought tolerant. Easily grown in a well-drained circumneutral or slightly alkaline loamy soil, preferring a sunny position. Does well in a sandy soil. Established plants are very drought tolerant. Plants are longer lived, more hardy and more aromatic when they are grown in a poor dry soil. A very polymorphic species. Slugs love the young shoots of this plant and have been known to destroy even well-established plants. A very ornamental plant, spreading by stolons to form loose patches, it can be invasive. There are many named forms selected for their ornamental value. Members of this genus are rarely if ever troubled by browsing deer.

Surface sow the seed from late winter to early summer in a greenhouse, making sure that the compost does not dry out. When large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in the greenhouse for their first winter. Plant out in late spring or early summer. Division in spring or autumn. Basal cuttings in late spring. Harvest the young shoots when about 10 - 15cm long, pot up in a lightly shaded position in a greenhouse or cold frame and plant them out when well rooted. Very easy.

History: The name Louisiana sagebrush was given because the plant grows near St. Louis,

Missouri, although it is also found in Utah, Texas and Arizona.

Properties: astringent

Medicinal Uses: The leaves are astringent. They were commonly used by the Native Americans to induce sweating, curb pain and diarrhea. A weak tea was used in the treatment of stomach ache and menstrual disorders. Used by pregnant women to alleviate morning sickness. Externally, a wash of the leaves was applied to itching, rashes, swellings, boils, sores, etc. The wash was also applied to eczema and as an underarm deodorant. A poultice of the leaves can be applied to spider bites, blisters and burst boils. A snuff of the crushed leaves has been used to treat headaches, the sinuses and nosebleeds. The tea is added to bathwater is effective against arthritis. To soothe stomach ulcers, a tea is made by combining it with Manzanilla. A little is taken 3 times a day, cool or cold. A handful of the dried herb is added to a pot of barley simmering water and the steam inhaled through the open mouth, to treat lingering sore throats.

Dosage: Cold infusion, 2-3 fluid ounces up to 4 times a day.

Toxicity: Not appropriate during pregnancy or with overt liver disease.

Culinary Uses: Leaves and flowering heads are used as a flavoring or garnish for sauces, gravies etc. A herb tea is made from the leaves and flowering heads.

Other Uses: The leaves can be placed in the shoes as a foot deodorant. An infusion of the leaves has been used as an underarm deodorant. The soft leaves can be used as a toilet paper. The plant can be burnt to repel mosquitoes. incense, steam-bath

References:

Los Remedios, Michael Moore, Red Crane Press, 1990; ISBN: 1-878610-06-6
Plants for a Future Database

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