

CUT-LEAFED TOOTHWORT

Cardamine concatenata



The common name, Toothwort, is “tooth plant”. The suffix, “wort”, is from the Old English word, *wyrt*, which is “herb” or “plant”. Other common names for this plant are Common Toothwort, Crinkleroot, Crow’s Foot, Crow Toes, Cut Leaf, Cutleaf Toothwort, Lady’s Smocks, Milkmaids, Pepper Root, Pepperwort, Purple-flowered Toothwort, Slashed Toothwort, Three-leaved Crinkleroot, Toothache Root, Toothwort, and Wild Horseradish.

The rootstocks of the Cut-leaved Toothwort are edible but taste both peppery and pungent. Both the Native Americans and the early Europeans settlers collected these rootstocks. They are sometimes eaten as a woodland trail nibble or they can be chopped up and used in both salads and sandwiches. These rootstocks can be cooked and added to soups, stews, or meats. They can also be washed, grated, and mixed with vinegar and salt to be used as a substitute for horseradish.

Cut-leaved Toothwort rootstocks were once believed to have medicinal properties. They were chewed for treating common colds, were used as poultices for treating headaches, and were made into tea for treating hoarseness. The mashed rootstocks were used as a poultice for treating toothaches. The peppery tasting leaves and stems are also edible. They can be used as a potherb or as a salad green. The leaves contain vitamin C and a glucosidal. These leaves were also used medicinally as a tonic, a stomachic, an expectorant, and an antiscorbutic.