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A Modern Herbal
by Mrs. M. Grieve

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Scullcaps

Botanical: Scutellarias

Family: N.O Labiatae

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---**Habitat**---The Scullcaps, belonging to the genus *Scutellaria*, are herbaceous, slender, rarely shrubby, labiate plants, scattered over different parts of the world, in temperate regions and tropical mountains, being specially abundant in America. There are about ninety known species belonging to this genus, only two members of which are natives of Great Britain - *Scutellaria galericulata* and *S. minor*. Both are found on the banks of rivers and lakes, and in watery places generally, and are decumbent or spreading, seldom quite erect.

The generic name is from the Latin *scutella* (a little dish), from the lid of the calyx. The form of the latter is a peculiarity by which they can be recognized; it is bell-shaped, lipped, as Hooker describes it: 'the tube being dilated opposite to the posterior lip, with a broad, flattened hollow pouch, the lip and pouch being deciduous in fruit and the mouth closed after flowering.' Hooker adds: 'The only insect known to visit the first species is a butterfly.'

SCULLCAP, COMMON

Botanical: *Scutellaria galericulata* (LINN.)

---**Synonyms**---Greater Scullcap. Helmet Flower. Hoodwort.
(French) Toque.

---**Part Used**---Herb.

The Common or Greater Scullcap is fairly common in England, though rare in Scotland and local in Ireland.

---**Description**---The root-stock is perennial and creeping. The square stems, 6 to 18 inches high, are somewhat slender, either paniculately branched, or, in small specimens, nearly simple, with opposite downy leaves, oblong and tapering, heart-shaped at the base, 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches long, notched and shortly petioled.

The flowers are in pairs, each growing from the axils of the upper, leaf-like bracts, which are quite indistinguishable from the true leaves, and are all turned one way, the pedicels being very short. The corollas are bright blue, variegated with white inside, the tube long and curved, three or four times as long as the calyx, the lips short, the lower lip having three shallow lobes.

Soon after the corolla has fallen off, the upper lip of the calyx, which bulges outward about the middle, closes on the lower as if on a hinge, and gives it the appearance of a capsule with a lid. When the seed is ripe, the cup being dry, divides into two distinct parts, and the seeds, already detached from the receptacle, fall to the ground.

The plant is in flower from July to September. It is subglabrous, with the angles of the stem, the leaves and flowering calyx finely pubescent.

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SCULLCAP, LESSER

Botanical: *Scutellaria minor* (LINN.)

---Part Used---Herb.

The Lesser Scullcap, which grows chiefly in bogs, is not common, except in the western counties and in Ireland.

It has the habit of the preceding species, but is more slender and often much branched and rarely attains 6 inches in height. The whole plant is more glabrous than *Scutellaria galericulata*.

The leaves are egg-shaped, the upper, quite entire, the lower ones often slightly toothed at the base. The flowers are small, dull pink-purple, the calyx having the same peculiarity as the larger species.

It flowers from July to October.

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SCULLCAP, VIRGINIAN

Botanical: *Scutellaria lateriflora* (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Labiatae

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---Synonyms---Mad-dog Scullcap. Madweed.

---Part Used---Herb.

The American species, Virginian Scullcap, flowering in July, with inconspicuous blue flowers in one-sided racemes, is one of the finest nervines ever discovered.

Popularly this plant is known in America as Mad-dog Scullcap or Madweed, having the reputation of being a certain cure for hydrophobia.

The English species, *Scutellaria galericulata* and *S. minor*, possess similar nervine properties to the American, and with *S. integrifolia* and other American species with the flowers in one-sided terminal racemes, are often used as substitutes.

Among the cultivated species are *S. micrantha*, from Siberia and the north of China, a handsome species with spiked racemes of blue flowers; and *S. Coccinea*, from Mexico, with scarlet flowers.

The French name for this plant is *Toque*.

---**Cultivation**---The various species of *Scutellaria* will grow in any ordinary garden soil, preferring sunny, open borders, where they will live much longer and grow more strongly than on a rich soil, though they seldom continue more than two or three years.

Plant in March or April, 6 inches apart.

Propagation is mostly effected by seeds, sown in gentle heat in February or March or out of doors, in half-shady positions, in light soil in April. Transplant into permanent quarters in the autumn. No further care is necessary than weeding.

Propagation may also be effected by division of roots in March or April, but the roots are generally lifted, divided and replanted only when overgrown.

---**Part Used**---The whole herb, collected in June, dried and powdered.

---**Constituents**---A volatile oil, Scutellarin, and a bitter glucoside, yielding Scutellarein on hydrolysis. Also tannin, fat, some bitter principle, sugar and cellulose.

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---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Scullcap has strong tonic, nervine and antispasmodic action, and is slightly astringent.

In hysteria, convulsions, hydrophobia, St. Vitus's dance and rickets, its action is invaluable. In nervous headaches, neuralgia and in headache arising from incessant coughing and pain, it offers one of the most suitable and reliable remedies. The dried extract, given in doses of from 1 to 3 grains as a pill, will relieve severe hiccough.

Many cases of hydrophobia have been cured by this remedy alone.

It is considered a specific for the convulsive twitchings of St. Vitus's dance, soothing the nervous excitement and inducing sleep when necessary, without any unpleasant symptoms following.

Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm.

It may be prescribed in all disorders of the nervous system, and has been suggested as a remedy for epilepsy. Writing on this point in the *British Medical Journal*, 1915, Dr. William Bramwell says: 'Its efficacy appears to be partly due to its stimulating the kidneys to increased activity....'

Overdoses of the tincture cause giddiness, stupor, confusion of mind, twitchings of the limbs, intermission of the pulse and other symptoms indicative of epilepsy, for which in diluted strength and small doses it has been successfully given.

The usual dose is an infusion of 1 OZ. of the powdered herb to a pint of boiling water, given in half-teacupful doses, every few hours. Both fluid and solid extracts are prepared and Scutellarin is also administered in doses of 1 to 2 grains.

Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm.

The European species, *S. galericulata*, was at one time given for the tertian ague, and was said to have proved beneficial where the fits were more obstinate than violent, 1 to 2 OZ. of the

expressed juice, or an infusion of a handful or two of the herb, being given. In England, however, the remedy was not in use.

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Bear in mind "A Modern Herbal" was written with the conventional wisdom of the early 1900's. This should be taken into account as some of the information may now be considered inaccurate, or not in accordance with modern medicine.

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