

Solomon's Seal

Family	Asparagaceae
Botanical	Polygonatum biflorum
Parts Used	Roots and young shoots
USDA Hardiness	3 - 9
Light	Light Shade
Soil	Light soil, good mulch
Duration	Perennial



Propagation You can estimate the plant's age by examining the rhizome. Each year the stem leaves a scar, or "seal" on the rhizome. Counting these will give you an idea of how long your plant has been alive. When harvesting the roots, leave several inches (or 3-4 nodes) of the newest portion untouched so that you don't kill or damage the plant. Always harvest/wildcraft with care and respect for the plant and its surrounding habitat. Plants are usually started by transplants or rhizomes. Seeds of Polygonatum can take up to 2 years to sprout, so you will get some seeding in established plantings.

Water As needed, do not overwater

Growing Polygonatum like a rich organic soil with a pH in the acidic to neutral zone. They need some shade to truly thrive. Damp shade is even better, although once established, they are quite drought tolerant. Plants can be started in the spring or fall. Solomon's Seal seldom needs division. It takes several years before a clump is large enough to divide for propagation purposes. When ready, divide in early spring or fall and leave several buds on each division, for the best success. The rhizomes can be divided even further, but it will take longer for them to become established. Another option is to remove and plant just the offsets at the out edges of a clump. Solomon's Seal does not require deadheading. The flowers are small and will drop off naturally. The foliage remains attractive all season, so the plant is virtually maintenance free. The stems even disconnect from the rhizomes on their own, after frost. But before that, the foliage turns a nice golden yellow.

Medicinal Uses Astringent, demulcent and tonic.

Benefits Solomon's Seal has been used for centuries to heal wounds, repair damaged tissue, bruises, and knit broken bones; relieve dry coughs and tuberculosis; treat chronic dysentery, diarrhea and hemorrhoids.

Preparation The fresh root, pounded and applied topically helps fade bruising. For centuries the powdered roots have been shown to make an excellent poultice for bruises, piles, inflammations and tumours. The bruised roots were much used as a popular cure for black eyes, mixed with cream. The bruised leaves made into a stiff ointment with lard served the same purpose.

A decoction can also be used as a facial rinse to help fade blemishes or for poison ivy and similar skin problems. Solomon's Seal root tea is a good tonic acting on the kidneys, heart and sexual organs as well as soothing the digestive system. An infusion can be used for profuse menstruation and internal bleeding, indigestion and other stomach and digestive complaints including ulcers, bowel problems and hemorrhoids. Used as a mouthwash, it is said to help strengthen gums. Oil infused with Solomon's Seal root is good to keep on hand for first aid treatment of sprains, strains and broken or bruised bones. Solomon's Seal root tea or tincture aids in the repair of broken bones and may be drunk after a doctor

has set the break. It is also great for torn ligaments, dislocations and other issues with joints.

Fines Herbes

Culinary Uses

POISONOUS: Do NOT eat the berries or leaves or stems!

Young shoots harvested in early spring can be prepared and eaten like asparagus. This is a favorite food in Turkey. The root dug in autumn and dried is also edible. Any roots should be boiled with three changes of water before being roasted and eaten. The roots macerated for some time in water yield a substance capable of being used as food and consisting principally of starch.

Dried Figs and Solomon's Seal Soup

Ingredients:

15 to 20 small dried figs

A handful of Solomon's seal

10 small red dates

A handful of dried almond seeds (sweet and bitter almonds)

Half a chicken, without skin

2 litres of water

Directions

1. Bring the water to a rolling boil. Add in the chicken and all the dried ingredients. Bring to another boil, turn down to simmer for 1.5 hours, stirring occasionally.
2. Season with some salt and white pepper, and serve hot.



Historical Facts

Solomon's Seal is named for King Solomon of Hebrew lore who was granted great wisdom by the Hebrew God and had a special seal that aided him in his magical workings, allowing him to command demons without coming to harm. According to herbal lore, King Solomon himself placed his seal upon this plant when he recognized its great value. Those with imagination can see the seal on the rootstock in the circular scars left by the stem after it dies back.

Additional Tips

POISONOUS: Do NOT eat the berries or leaves or stems!

Nutrition Facts

Solomon's Seal is an excellent anti-inflammatory. It contains allantoin, which is important in the reduction of inflammation.