

Glycyrrhiza glabra

Glycyrrhiza glabra, commonly known as licorice, is a perennial herb native to parts of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Its roots have been used for centuries in traditional medicine systems including Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Greco-Arab medicine for digestive, respiratory, and inflammatory conditions.

Key facts

- **Scientific name:** *Glycyrrhiza glabra*
- **Common names:** Licorice, Liquorice root
- **Family:** Fabaceae
- **Active compounds:** Glycyrrhizin, flavonoids, liquiritin
- **Typical forms:** Teas, extracts, powders, capsules

Botanical characteristics

Glycyrrhiza glabra is a herbaceous perennial plant with pinnate leaves and purple to pale blue flowers. Its sweet-tasting roots are harvested, dried, and processed for medicinal and food applications.

Traditional and modern uses

Traditionally, licorice root has been used to support digestive health, soothe sore throats, and alleviate respiratory discomfort. In modern herbal medicine, it is commonly included in formulations for gastrointestinal support, cough relief, and anti-inflammatory wellness products.

Mechanism and research

Research indicates that glycyrrhizin and related compounds may exhibit anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and mucosal protective effects. Deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL) preparations are often used for digestive support due to reduced mineralocorticoid activity.

Safety and regulation

Excessive intake of licorice containing glycyrrhizin may contribute to elevated blood pressure, potassium imbalance, and fluid retention in sensitive individuals. Standardized and regulated products are recommended, especially for long-term use.

Culinary and supplement context

Licorice root is widely used in teas, candies, herbal blends, and dietary supplements. Its characteristic sweet flavor and long history in herbal medicine continue to support its popularity worldwide.