

## LIQUORICE

A sweet and chewy black confection  
made from the juice of a root



### Description:

The liquorice plant (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is a flowering plant in the pea family. Originally from southeast Europe and parts of Asia, it's one of the world's oldest herbal remedies and was even found in the ancient Egyptian tomb of King Tutankhamen, amongst his many other treasures. It is now grown commercially for its roots and to make liquorice sweets – in Greek *Glycyrrhiza* translates as 'sweet root'.

It is quite a large plant growing to over 1.5m-2m tall and in late summer has vibrant purple-blue flowers that are followed by seedpods containing 2-5 seeds each. Their roots can grow to 4m long and it is here that the sweet yellow sap can be found. Glycyrrhizin is the ingredient found in the roots that gives liquorice its sweet flavour. It is over fifty times sweeter than regular sugar but has virtually no calories and won't rot your teeth!

### Uses:

Liquorice roots are dried after harvesting them in late autumn. They can then be used for many things: they can be chewed as a sweet treat or used to make a herbal tea; they can be pulverised and the powder used as a sweetener; or they can be used as a medicine and help to soothe sore throats or an upset stomach, treat a cough or improve skin conditions like eczema.

However, the most well-known use of liquorice sap is to make sweets. In Pontefract Yorkshire, liquorice was mixed with sugar to make Pontefract Cakes – one of the first liquorice confections to be made (see picture above).

But be careful – eating too much liquorice can make you sick! If you eat a lot every day, it acts like a poison and can lead to heart problems.



Seeds



Roots

## Reading comprehension questions:

### 1) True or False?

- Eat as much liquorice as you like – it's good for you. \_\_\_\_\_
- Liquorice is a herbal remedy that even the ancient Egyptians used. \_\_\_\_\_
- Glycyrrhizin is found in the leaves of the liquorice plant. \_\_\_\_\_

### 2) In the text, find another word that means:

- Sweets - \_\_\_\_\_ (hint: begins with 'c')
- Bright and colourful - \_\_\_\_\_ (hint: begins with 'v')

### 3) What is the name of the ingredient found in liquorice roots that is used to make liquorice?

\_\_\_\_\_

### 4) Where were the first liquorice sweets made? \_\_\_\_\_

### 5) Write a short description of the liquorice plant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 6) Why do you need to be careful about how much liquorice you eat?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 7) Draw a little picture of a liquorice sweet: