

# THE STORY OF THE *Starflower*

When Borage blooms in the fields of Canadian prairie farmers, the land looks as if it has been draped in a vivid green and purple blanket. The shrubs grow about three feet high, and their delicate flowers ripple and wave in the prairie breeze.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) is also known as Starflower, for the star-shaped arrangement of its flower petals. Although the blossom is a spectacular sight, the plants are harvested not for their flowers, but for their seeds, which contain an oil rich in Gamma Linolenic Acid (GLA), a “good” fat.

Borage is a colourful flowering herb that is native to Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor.

Belonging to the Boraginaceae family, some of the plant’s closest relatives include Forget-me-nots and Comfrey.

Borage has a long and colourful history that goes back as far



## *The Borage plant grows from wild herb to nutritional supplement.*

as the Roman times, when Pliny the Elder wrote about it in his encyclopedic tome, the *Historia Naturalis*. Pliny noted Borage as an antidepressant

“because it maketh a man merry and joyfull”.

Throughout ancient times, Borage was associated with bravery. The Celtic warriors drank borage-flavored wine to give them courage.

Indeed, some authorities believe that the Latin name *borago* is a corruption of “corago” from “cor”, meaning *the heart*, and “ago” meaning *I bring*.

In the Middle Ages, the blooms of the Borage were used in salads and syrup made from the flowers was thought to “comforteth the heart, purgeth melancholy, and quieteth the phrenticke and lunaticke person”. The raw leaves were believed to engender good blood, “especially in those that have been lately sicke”.

In the early part of the 19th century, the young tops of the Borage plant were sometimes boiled as a pot-herb, and the young leaves considered good in salads. Mrs. M. Grieve, author of “A Modern Herbal”, first published in 1931, wrote that “the



fresh herb has a cucumber-like fragrance". It was steeped in water and mixed with lemon and lime to create a "refreshing and restorative summer drink". She notes that the leaf was also used in wines and ciders, and was still used this way in the early years of the 20th century.

Mrs. Grieve also commented on the delicate blossoms of the Borage plant: "Our great grandmothers preserved the flowers and candied them."

Today, Borage is grown as a commercial crop in North America and abroad. Its seed contains 20-23% GLA, providing the richest natural source of this fatty acid. Borage is therefore used to manufacture a variety of nutritional GLA supplements.

GLA is popularly used by women suffering from PMS. However, recent research has also confirmed Borage's long association with the heart, proving GLA to be useful not only in cardiovascular disease, but numerous other areas including: rheumatoid

arthritis, diabetic neuropathy, cancer, and skin diseases such as eczema and psoriasis.

The benefits of Borage complement the benefits of other fatty acid oils including Evening Primrose Oil, Flax Seed Oil, and Fish Oils.

Borage Oil is available in easy-to-swallow capsules that may be taken on a daily basis as part of a regular supplementation program including vitamins and other essential nutrients to promote good health.

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Address: 102 Melville Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, CANADA S7J 0R1.  
Phone: (306) 975-1166 Fax: (306) 242-3829  
Website: [www.bioriginal.com](http://www.bioriginal.com)

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