

# Club Moss Herb Profile

## Also known as

Lycopodium clavatum, Vegetable Sulphur, Goat's Claw, Stag's Horn, Wolf Claw, Running Pine, and Robin Hood's Hatband

## Introduction

Club moss is an evergreen related to ferns that is native to Europe, and harvested mostly in Russia. Though it's called a moss, it is actually more related to ferns than to true mosses. Traditionally, herbal healers employed the entire plant to relieve muscle cramping, and as a diuretic. One herbal recommends that those suffering from muscle cramps and gout use a pillow stuffed with club moss, and reports relieving cramps by wrapping the affected area in lengths of club moss. Nowadays, the only part of the plant used medicinally is the powdered spores by which it reproduces. Interestingly, those spores have a number of other uses as well. In Victorian England, they were sometimes used in the theater to create a flash fire, since the high aluminum content of the plant cause a bright, fast-burning fire when ignited. The spores are highly moisture resistant, and can be used as a dusting powder for skin ailments like eczema, and to prevent chafing, and may be applied to wounded tissue to absorb moisture. Its most common modern pharmaceutical use is as a dusting powder to prevent pills from sticking together. The plant is known to be diuretic, analgesic and antispasmodic.

## Constituents

Alkaloids, about 0.1-0.2%, of which the major one is lycopodine; with clavatine, clavatoxine, nicotine and many others. Polyphenolic acids including dihydrocaffeic, Flavonoids including apigenin, Miscellaneous; triterpenes.

## Parts Used

Whole lichen (also known as spores or moss)

## Typical Preparations

Dried spores as a powder, tincture prepared from dried leaves and stems. Usually found in extract and capsule form. Suitable as a tea.

## Summary

Once listed in the United States Pharmacopeia, club moss is traditionally used to treat kidney and liver complaints, promote healing in wounds, stop bleeding and help drain tissues of excess fluids. It is a recognized diuretic, and may have analgesic and antiseptic properties. The leaves and stems contain two poisons, lycopodine and clavatine, but the spores are completely non-toxic. Club moss is widely used in homeopathic medicine to treat a wide variety of ailments, but its effectiveness is not established by

research. Among the traditional uses are: - treat irritable bladder - diuretic to encourage urination - prevent chafing - regulate menstruation - reduce edema - relieve itching in skin conditions - treat eczema, erysipelas - antispasmodic to relieve gastritis, kidney complaints, dysentery

## Precautions

Not to be used while pregnant. Not for long term use. When used as directed, there are no known side effects or dangers, though severe overdoses can cause gastric distress.

**Botanical: *Lycopodium clavatum* (LINN.)**

**Family: N.O. Lycopodiaceae**

- [Medicinal Action and Uses](#)

---**Synonyms**---*Muscus Terrestris repens*. Vegetable Sulphur. Wolf's Claw.

---**Parts Used**---The spores, the fresh plant.

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This species is found all over the world and occurs throughout Great Britain, being most plentiful on the moors of the northern counties.

Though this species of Club Moss occurs in Great Britain, the spores are collected chiefly in Russia, Germany and Switzerland, in July and August, the tops of the plants being cut as the spikes approach maturity and the powder shaken out and separated by a sieve. Probably the spores used commercially are derived also from other species in addition to *Lycopodium clavatum*.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---The part of the plant now employed is the minute spores which, as a yellow powder, are shaken out of the kidney-shaped capsules or sporangia growing on the inner side of the bracts covering the fruit spike. Under the names of *Muscus terrestris* or *M. clavatum* the whole plant was used, dried, by ancient physicians as a stomachic and diuretic, mainly in calculous and other kidney complaints; the spores do not appear to have been used alone until the seventeenth century, when they were employed as a diuretic in dropsy, a drastic in diarrhoea, dysentery and suppression of urine, a nervine in spasms and hydrophobia, an aperient in gout and scurvy and a corroborant in rheumatism, and also as an application to wounds. They were, however, more used on the Continent than in this country and never had a place in the London Pharmacopoeia, though they have been prescribed for irritability of the bladder, in the form of a tincture, which is official in the United States Pharmacopoeia.

The spores are still medicinally employed by herbalists in this country, both internally and externally, as a dusting powder in various skin diseases such as eczema and erysipelas and for excoriated surfaces, to prevent chafing in infants. Their chief pharmaceutical use is as a pill powder, for enveloping pills to prevent their adhesion to one another when placed in a box, and to disguise their taste. Dose, 10 to 60 grains. They have such a strong repulsive power that, if the hand is powdered with them, it can be dipped in water without becoming wet.