



### **ELECAMPANE**

Latin: *Inula helenium*

Welsh: Marchalan

The origin of its Latin name is the subject of some dispute. According to some mythologies Helen of Troy was gathering the plant when she was abducted by Paris, son of Priam the king of Troy. Others say the plant sprang from Helen's tears when she was abducted. Another more obscure derivation is taken from Helenus another son of Priam.

Elecampane was regarded as a cure-all by the Romans. From the time of Hippocrates (c.460-377BC) it was valued as a medicine for digestive problems, asthma, coughs and colds.

The roots of the plant are very bitter, but the juice from them is sweet. According to Pliny, candied roots were recommended 'to help digestion and increase mirth', and the candied root was long regarded as a sweetmeat. The Romans used a mixture of dried roots pounded into flour and mixed with honey, raisins and dates as a tonic for a weak stomach. Possibly the alleged association with the tears of Helen of Troy fostered the belief that a facepack containing Elecampane juice would improve the complexion.

Elecampane was once used in the treatment of skin diseases in both humans and animals, a usage which earned it the name Scabwort.

Elecampane is strongly antibacterial. Its modern day medicinal usage is confined almost exclusively to the treatment of respiratory disorders