

The Ethnobotany of Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*) in Greco-Roman Antiquity

This project examines the ethnobotanical, cultural, and scientific dimensions of the common ivy (*Hedera helix*) in ancient Greece and Rome. By tracing its appearances in literature and material culture from the 5th-century BCE to 476 CE, I explore how the ancients understood and utilized this evergreen plant symbolically and medicinally. The ivy's practical applications were remarkably diverse: it was carved into drinking cups (σκύφοι), prescribed to treat dysentery, toothaches, burns, and bites, as well as an emmenagogue, contraceptive, and abortifacient, among many other uses. Beyond its ethnobotanical roles, the ivy held deep cultural significance as a symbol of life and immortality, closely associated with the cult of Dionysus and the iconography of revelry and renewal.

Methodologically, this study draws on textual evidence collected from the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) and Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (TLL) to reconstruct the ancient history of the ivy. I also recreated and chemically analyzed several ivy-based remedies from Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* using high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), comparing their active compounds with those of modern herbal medicines available today.

The poster's top left pane introduces the botanical and historical background and outlines the scope of my research. The bottom left pane presents the ivy's cultural and mythological associations. The central section details its ethnobotanical uses across time with key excerpts from classical authors, while the rightmost section presents the chemical analysis results, discussing how modern pharmacological data contextualize and help us to better understand Dioscorides' descriptions.