Artemisia absinthium L.

Standardized Common Name: Wormwood

Other Common Names: Absinth, Absinthe Sagewort, Absinthium, Madderwort

Family: Asteraceae (Compositae)

Parts in Commerce: Whole herb (including stems, leaves and flowers)

Identification:

- Stems strong but woody only at the base, striated, often somewhat hairy or smooth and reddish, white inside
- Larger leaves petiolate, several cm long, at least bipinnately lobed or divided; ultimate segments 5–20 mm long, 1–6 mm broad, mostly with obtuse apices
- Smallest leaves few-lobed or simple, almost sessile
- Both sides of leaf bearing silky hairs; at least the lower surface densely pubescent
- Heads borne on leafy panicles, numerous, almost globose, greenish-yellow, about 3 mm broad, containing numerous florets
- Involucre hemispherical, 2–3 mm high; outer bracts linear to oblong or oblanceolate, green; inner bracts ovate and obtuse with dry margins; all bracts pubescent
- Receptacle of head bearing long white hairs
- Marginal florets 9–20, lacking anthers; those in the center of the disk numerous, hermaphroditic with well-developed ovaries
- All florets more or less tubular, 1.5–2 mm long, marginal florets irregular, with small teeth or lobes, lobes not hairy; style long-branched, protruding, irregular in some florets
- Florets have no pappus
- Odor aromatic, characteristic
- Taste strongly bitter

***Artemisia vulgaris* L.:** Numerous species of *Artemisia* hav been used medicinally. One of the most common of these i *A. vulgaris* (Mugwort), which has been confused with *A. ab sinthium*. The taxonomy of *A. vulgaris* has been complicatec Almost a dozen North American species have been lumpe into *A. vulgaris* in the past, but the species in the strict sens is European and is found in North America only where i has been naturalized, particularly in the East, or cultivatec The leaves and flowering tops or the leaves alone may be used. Its identifying features include the following:

- Stems angled and striated, red to purplish, smooth or slightly hairy
- Leaves pinnately divided into several oblanceolate to obovate segments, these irregularly toothed or lobed in larger leaves; lobes and teeth acute and forward-pointing
- Lower leaves short-petioled, upper leaves sessile; leaf bases somewhat auriculate
- Lower leaf surface densely white-pubescent; margins may be minutely revolute
- Upper leaf surface green and nearly glabrous; may have scattered short, long-armed T-shaped hairs
- Leaf venation netted, not conspicuous
- Uppermost bracts of panicle small and simple
- Heads numerous, short-pedicelled, erect or slightly drooping
- Involucre cup-shaped, 2.5–4 mm high; bracts with broad dry margins and gray pubescence
- Receptacle hairless
- Ray florets 6–9, disk florets 13–20; corollas reddish-brown or yellowish; disk florets with apices of teeth reflexed
- Odor aromatic
- Taste aromatic and somewhat bitter

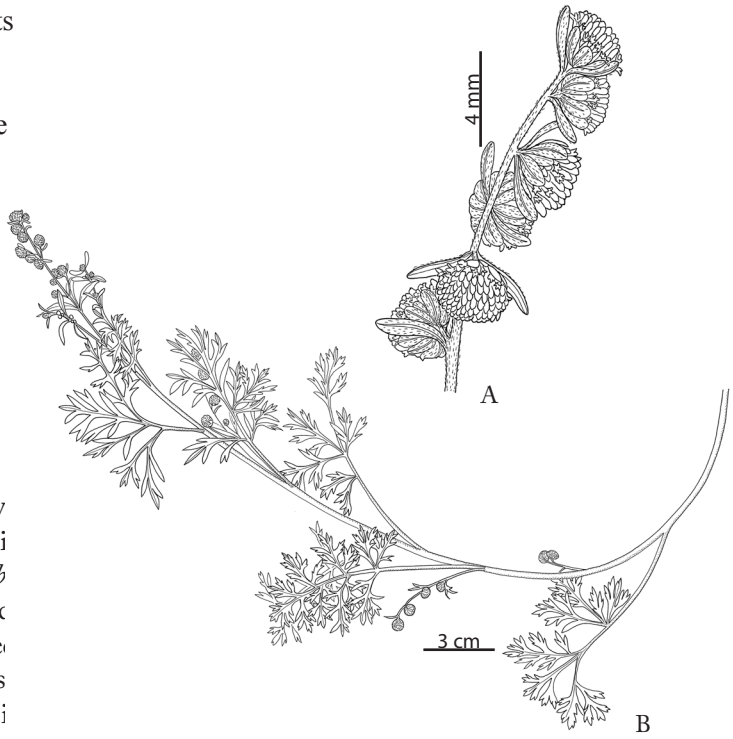

Figure 9: a—b, *Artemisia absinthium* inflorescence and habit.

Taxonomy: *Artemisia* includes somewhere from 200 to over 500 species of shrubs and herbs, which are broadly distributed in the Northern Hemisphere, with a major center of diversity in China. There are about 57 species in Europe, several of which have notable medicinal or culinary uses, including *A. absinthium*. Ragweed is also a member of this diverse genus, whose taxonomy is complex; no complete modern treatment exists.

Description: Perennial herb, sometimes slightly woody at the base. Stems clustered, 30–100 cm high, branching above, pubescent with grayish hairs or glabrous and often reddish. Leaves alternate, 2–3-pinnately lobed or divided; lower leaves larger, more divided and with longer petioles than upper, to 10–12 cm long and broad; upper leaves sometimes simple and sessile; ultimate leaf lobes oblong or oblanceolate to linear or lanceolate in upper leaves, usually 5–20 mm long, 1–6 mm broad; apices obtuse or acute on upper leaves; both surfaces pubescent, densely so on lower side. Inflorescence a panicle, 15–40 cm long, with straight branches bearing numerous reduced leaves and heads (capitula); heads pedicellate, drooping, ca. 3 mm in diameter. Heads greenish-yellow, rounded; all florets nearly tubular but of two types, ray florets female, disk florets hermaphroditic; involucre hemispherical, 2–3 mm high, of 12–18 bracts (phyllaries); outer phyllaries oblong, the inner ovate, pubescent with scarious margins and obtuse apices; receptacle bearing long white hairs; ray florets 9–20, corolla ca. 1.5 mm long, short-toothed, glabrous; disk florets 30–50, corolla campanulate, 1.5–2 mm long, 5-toothed, glabrous. Fruit an achene, nearly cylindrical, smooth, glabrous, without pappus.

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