

# *Prunella vulgaris* L.

**Standardized Common Name:** Heal All

**Other Common Names:** All Heal, Brunella, Prunella, Self Heal

**Family:** Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

**Taxonomy:** *Prunella* includes 4 herbaceous species and ranges from Europe to East Asia and North Africa. *Prunella vulgaris* has also been widely naturalized in North America. It is a variable species, and many varieties or forms have been created to name variations in leaf shape, flower color, and so forth. Indigenous American populations have narrower leaves than European populations, and are often termed *P. vulgaris* var. *lanceolata* (Bart.) Fern.

**Description:** Perennial herb; stems usually multiple, quadrangular, unbranched or branched, often creeping and rooting at the nodes, ascending in flower, 5–25(–60) cm high, purple below, more or less pubescent. Leaves opposite, petiolate, (2.5–)4–5(–9) cm long, ovate to rhomboid-ovate, or narrowly elliptical to lanceolate; base rounded when leaves are broad, or tapering when leaves are narrow; apex acute to obtuse or rounded; margins entire or slightly crenulate; surface dark green above, more or less pubescent especially beneath. Inflorescence a short crowded spike of flowers in clusters of 3; flowers sessile, subtended by bracts, opening a few at a time; bracts membranous, nearly round, 5–15 mm long, with cuspidate apex. Calyx bilabiate, usually 8–9 mm long, green or purple, 10-nerved, usually somewhat pubescent; upper lip 3-toothed, teeth tipped with tiny points, central tooth broadest; lower lip 2-toothed, narrower than the upper. Corolla bilabiate, (8–)13–15(–18) mm long,

violet to bluish or lavender, or rarely pink or white; upper lip larger, erect and arched, unlobed, pubescent; lower lip spreading to somewhat reflexed, with 3 lobes, the central lobe largest and rounded, with minutely toothed margins, the lateral 2 lobes at sides of corolla mouth smaller, oblong. Stamens 4, 2 longer, 2 shorter; filaments 2-toothed at apex, the anthers borne on lower teeth. Ovary deeply 4-lobed, style gynobasic; fruit 4 nutlets.

**Parts in Commerce:** Inflorescence (or occasionally whole herb)

## **Identification:**

- Compact spike, with same diameter throughout (not narrowing at the top)
- Flowers sessile, subtended by bracts; bracts nearly round, to 15 mm long, with a narrowed point at the apex
- Calyx green to purple, persisting after corolla has fallen
- Calyx strongly bilabiate, usually 8–9 mm long, shorter than corolla
- Upper lip of calyx broader than lower lip, 3-toothed with teeth ending in small points; central tooth much broader than lateral teeth
- Lower lip of calyx narrower, 2-toothed; teeth lanceolate, to 2 mm long
- Calyx 10-nerved, usually pubescent at least along nerves and margins of teeth

- Corolla purple to bluish-violet or lavender (wild plants rarely rose-pink or white), typically pubescent
- Corolla (8–)13–15(–18) mm long, bilabiate, with upper lip larger, arching, unlobed
- Lower lip of corolla spreading to somewhat reflexed, 3-lobed, the central lobe largest and rounded
- Stamens 4; filaments branched at the top, with lower branch bearing the anther and upper branch forming a pointed tooth

**Adulterants:** Adulteration has not been reported. Although *P. vulgaris* is usually cultivated, other species of *Prunella* could conceivably be confused with it in Europe. Features found only in other species include:

- Corolla length over 18 mm
- Corolla not purplish
- Calyx teeth nearly equal in breadth or reduced to almost absent on upper lip, or over 2 mm long on lower lip

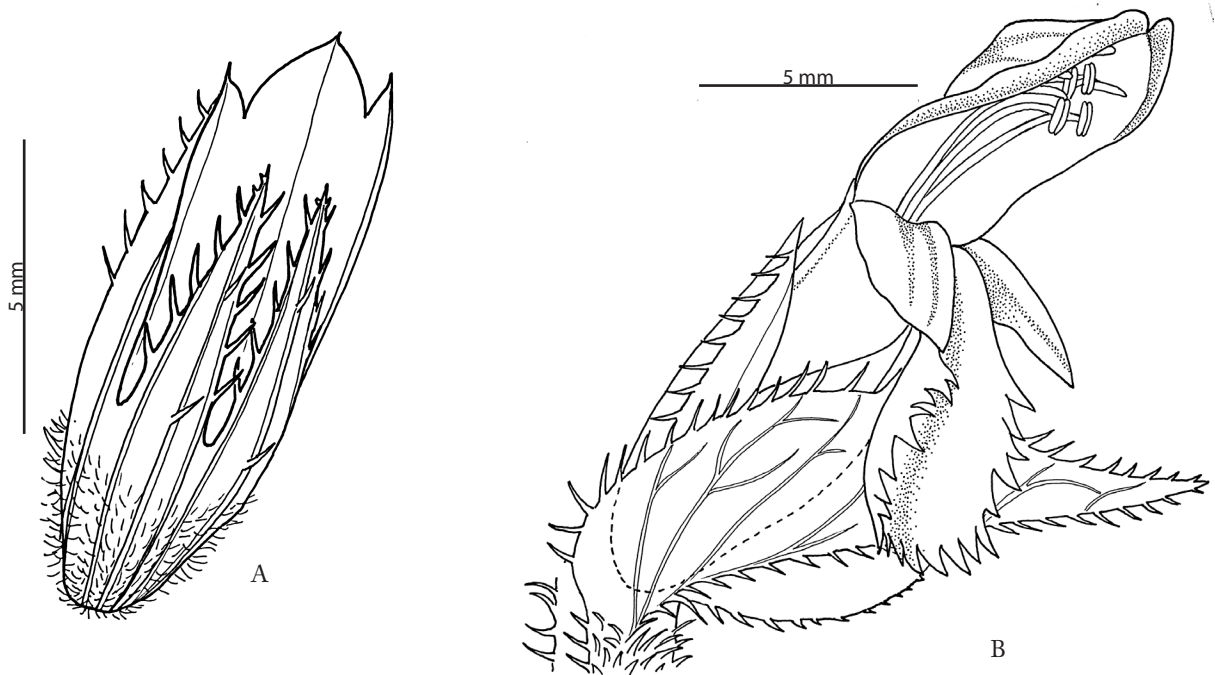
*Prunella grandiflora* Jacq. hybridizes readily with *P. vulgaris*, producing populations with numerous intermediate features. Hybrids tend to have long corollas and short rounded teeth on the filaments, as well as a peduncle of 1.5 cm or more between the inflorescence and the uppermost pair of leaves.

**References:**

Fernald ML. The indigenous varieties of *Prunella vulgaris* in North America. *Rhodora*. 1913;15:179–186.

Högström S. Identifiering av hybrider mellan praktbrunört *Prunella grandiflora* och brunört *P. vulgaris*. *Svensk Bot Tidskr.* 1999;93:95–102.

Smith AR. *Prunella*. In: Tutin TG, Heywood VH, Burges NA, et al., eds. *Flora Europaea*. Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1972:162.



**Figure 58:** a–b, *Prunella vulgaris* calyx and flower inside bracts.