

Stillingia sylvatica Garden ex L.

Standardized Common Name: Stillingia

Other Common Names: Nettle Potato, Queen's Delight, Queen's Root, Silver Leaf, Yaw Root

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Taxonomy: *Stillingia* includes about 30 species, most native to tropical regions of the New World. *Stillingia sylvatica* is one of two species that are native to the southeastern United States. The other of these, *S. aquatica* Chapm., is relatively uncommon and confined to swampy habitats; nevertheless, the two species are known to hybridize.

Description: Perennial herb or subshrub with milky latex. Stems and roots arising from a woody cylindrical rhizome; roots widely spaced, long, cylindrical, woody. Stems usually several, erect to spreading, 0.2–1.2 m high, herbaceous to slightly woody, unbranched or dichotomously branching; older bark cracked and reddish. Leaves alternate, variable, elliptic to oblanceolate or obovate, 2–12 cm long, green or red; base tapering, petiolate or sessile; apex acute, rounded, or emarginate; margins serrulate to crenulate; midrib prominent. Flowers unisexual, plants monoecious; inflorescence a terminal spike of cymules, 2.5–13 cm long; male and female flowers tiny, borne in separate clusters, subtended by bracts. Male flowers in clusters of 5–13; calyx shallowly 2-lobed; stamens 2. Female flowers solitary; sepals 3; ovary 3-loculed, with 3 styles. Fruit a septicidal capsule, 6–12 mm in diameter; seeds 3, 4–8 mm long.

Parts in Commerce: Root with rhizome, usually dried

Identification:

- Long cylindrical pieces, 0.5–3 cm in diameter, tapering; branches few
- Surface brown, or reddish where outer layers are damaged, longitudinally wrinkled
- In cross-section, shows thin reddish cork layer; fairly thick ring of parenchyma including secondary cortical (pericycle) and phloem zones, containing brownish resin cells; distinct cambium layer; broad central cylinder of pale xylem in numerous wedges separated by very thin parenchyma rays
- Cork and phloem in fresh material often easily separating from xylem, so bark can be peeled away or pulled off in a cylinder
- Fracture fibrous
- Odor characteristic
- Taste pungent, bitter

Confusion with other species has not been reported. *Stillingia aquatica*, which looks quite different from *S. sylvatica*, does not have long woody roots; instead, numerous slender secondary roots are borne on a single short taproot.

References:

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