

## Captions and Footnotes

Fig. 1 This Lamb's-ear specimen was collected and dried at Elsewhere Museum here in Greensboro. After that, it was analyzed by petting, stroking and caressing; by writing and thinking; and by browsing the Elsewhere library, the internet, and the streets of Greensboro, to find details about its qualities, and a lead that would help me understand why I experienced such a strong and immediate attraction to it. The rest of my findings are on view at Elsewhere from 1st of June 2018.

Fig. 2 A painting called *L'Innocence* (1893) is included in the collage; it is by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, whose work was appreciated by those who also favored black walnut [Mather, F.J. (1927). *Modern Painting*]. Snoopy is a breed of beagle with American, German and Norwegian heritage.

(1) But does it really matter? The gathering, naming, and classification of plants in modern times is carried on primarily with the objective of showing the origins and relationships of plants, and of providing *POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION* for the different kinds of plants. See p. 299 in Wilson, C. L. & Loomis, W. E. (1957). *Botany*. New York, NY: The Dryden Press.

(2) Naturalized plants are those that have become established as a part of the plant life of a region other than their place of origin. In order to qualify for such status, two conditions must be met:

a) The plant in question must be foreign ("exotic," "introduced," and "alien" are other terms used in this context).

b) It must be able to grow on its own and produce a new generation without human aid (e.g. watering, fertilizing, pest or weed control). I.e. it must become a wild plant in its adopted homeland. Not all plants introduced from foreign lands are resilient enough to naturalize.

Some alien plants that become naturalized are such strong growers that they spread out of control, despite human attempts to control them. Such naturalized plants easily get a prerogative prefix "invasive" attached to them. Thereby, naturalized plants become generally classified as weeds. However, what is a weed depends greatly of the position of the observer. E.g. some classify dandelion as a weed, some eat it as a herb.

(3) What else could ever be that tolerant?  
*LOOOOOOVE:*

You see, my love is alive  
It's like a seed that only needs  
The thought of you  
To grow  
So if you feel the need for company  
Please, my darling, let it be me  
I may not be able to express  
The depth of the love I feel for you  
But a writer put it very nicely  
When he was away from the one he loved  
He sat down and wrote these words:

No wind, (no wind)  
No rain, (no rain)  
Nor winter's cold  
Can stop me, babe  
(Oh, babe) baby (baby)  
If you're my goal

Ain't no mountain high enough  
Ain't no valley low enough  
Ain't no river wild enough  
To keep me from you

*Ain't No Mountain High Enough (excerpt).*  
*Written by Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson in 1966. Performed in 1970 by Diana Ross.*

(4) "I would take it everywhere, I would always carry it in my lap, I would always caress it and comb its otherworldly soft and silky fur."  
*Dreamt (1990) and written (2018) by Milla Toukkari.*

(5) Just like its other fellow-countrymen, it does bring interest to the border. (see Internet)

(6) I myself like to go out into the backyard garden on early mornings and just after dusk, and slowly and carefully slide my hand into the plant clump. I then sluggishly – no, even more slowly than a slug would – move my hand upwards the stem, feeling the wool, the joints of the plant, the leaf margins and venation with my fingers, between my fingertips, pressing and pinching a little as I cover the length of the spine. As I reach the top of the flower spike, I try to find my way in between the bracts, the tiny felty creases protecting the buds of the herb. A few more caresses for the foliage pursuing the sun and the moon, and then a gentle murmuring fairwell to the little hairy outsider.  
*I feel you.*

## Lamb's-ear *Stachys Byzantina*



Fig. 1  
Lamb's-ear specimen.  
Collection date: 05/09/2018.  
Place: The Yard at  
Elsewhere Museum  
S Elm St. 606  
Greensboro NC.

For more details, see page 4.

## DESCRIPTION

Lamb's-ear is a perennial herb most easily recognizable for its dense, silvery hair. The hair color varies from gray to silver-white to white, but is always silky and lanate. The plant grows in close, felty clumps, which is why they are mostly used as ground cover or as soft edging in gardens.

Flowers are purplish-pink or even magenta pink, growing on a tall, 4-9 inches long spike that form in early summer. They are relatively small in size and partially covered with also woolly epicalyx. Many consider the inflorescence of Lamb's-ear insignificant, and all variants of the species do not even flower.

The stem is four-angular and it often reaches 6 to 8 inches in height, 12-18 inches with flower. The leaves are arranged oppositely on the stems, their petioles being semiamplexicaul. The basal leaves are oblong and elliptic in shape, usually 4 inches long and 1-inch-wide. In addition to the reference to a lamb's ear, some characterize them also as tongue-shaped. The overall leaf size varies between 2 to 4 inches in length.

The leaf margins are serrate and irregularly wavy. Nonetheless, the crenulate silhouette is often invisible as it is covered with hair. The leaf apexes are attenuate, tapering gradually to a rounded point.

Some beginners to plant identification confuse this plant with Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) (1), another plant with silver leaves and a tall flower spike. The most distinct difference is the flower color, which is usually yellow in Common Mullein.

## NAME AND ORIGIN

The common name of the plant comes from the look and feel of the leaf. In addition to the woolly covering and texture, also the curved contours are true to the reference.

The first half of the scientific name is descriptive, too. The genus name, *Stachys*, is Greek for "an ear of grain," referring to the shape of the flower spikes. The specific epithet, *byzantina*, refers to the plant's

Middle Eastern origin, including an area that was once part of the classical Byzantine Empire. Today, that area is divided between several countries, and in accordance to modern geography, the origin of Lamb's-ear can be estimated to lay in Central-eastern Turkey, northern Iran, and Armenia.

Indigenous to parts of the Middle East, Lamb's-ears are considered invasive plants in parts of North America. This Old World native has naturalized so well in much of the New World that it has become a common roadside weed in New England (2).

## GROWING AND CONTROL

Lamb's-ears are extremely easy to grow, as they require very little maintenance. The ideal environment is a well-drained, preferably slightly acidic soil in full sun. Nonetheless, it appreciates some light afternoon shade in hot summer climates.

It is a very resilient plant: it can take the bites of rabbits, deer, and bears, and it tolerates the closeness of Black Walnut.

It can be planted even near main thoroughfares as it is also tolerant to pollution, and can grow roots in shallow, rocky and dry soil. It also endures drought well (3).

**Fig. 2 An adaptation of the popular child-and-lamb motif, saluted by Lady Snoopy from the Elsewhere collection.**

Too much shade, however, may impede leaf drying and promote the onset of disease. The woolly leaves of this plant tend to trap moisture, and in humid climates such as the St. Louis area, plant leaves that sit closest to the ground are susceptible to attack from rot and leaf spot. Due to this, the plant's only caveat is the well-drained soil.

Otherwise, it is very difficult to kill.

In gardens, Lamb's-ear is most used as an edging for beds and a softening to hard corners and walks. Due to the easy transplanting and fast spreading, masses for ground cover can be created effortlessly with this perennial. Because of the leaf's suede- and velvet-like texture, Lamb's-ears are favored for their foliage rather than their flowers. It is often recommended for children's gardens because of its wonderful, soft feel (4).

As an edger, though, they will need to be kept within bounds because in an ideal environment, they may reproduce even aggressively. Besides spreading by roots, flowering Lamb's-ears can self-seed profusely although that can be controlled by deadheading, i.e. cutting off the dead or spent flowers from the living plant. Also, creeping stems root wherever they make contact with the soil.

Due to its resourcefulness and resiliency, Lamb's-ear can easily become invasive in warmer climates and is then very hard to eradicate (5).

## OTHER USES

In Brazil it is used as an edible herb called Lambari. It has also been used as a medicinal plant. It was considered an ideal wound dressing on battlefields, as not only do the soft, fuzzy leaves absorb blood and help it clot more quickly, but they also contain antibacterial, antiseptic, and anti-inflammatory properties (6).

