

It's a member of the borage family, a strong-growing perennial with somewhat hairy leaves 12 to 18 inches long, rising on short stems from a central crown. The flower is a pretty blue bell, fading to pink. Don't wait to see the blossoms however, because the foliage is at its best if cut before blooming. The plant reaches a height of over two feet and spreads to a yard across. It's remarkably non-invasive for such a sturdy being.

Plants are hearty, can tolerate drought and there are no insects known to be a problem. Even disease is rare.

It's incredibly useful:

1. Activate a compost heap

Leaves can be used to help activate compost as they're high in nitrogen, making them an outstanding bioactivator. If you have a large amount of fall leaves or other dried

brown material, layering it with comfrey leaves is a good way to balance the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and jumpstart decomposition.

Gather your comfrey leaves and crush them or cut them into smaller pieces. Add a bit of water, then crush them for another minute to two to make a paste. Add more water to liquefy. Simply pour it onto your compost. The result is a higher nutrient content.

2. Boost seedlings

Young perennials, such as berry bushes, fruit trees, asparagus, herbs, etc., and fruiting vegetable seedlings like squash, cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers, can get a great nutritional kickstart from comfrey. When you plant, simply bury a few of the leaves underneath each planting spot. As they decompose, they'll provide essential nutrients to help your young plants grow nice and strong.

3. Support the health of established plants

Make a compost tea to provide an instant nutrient boost to your established plants. Steep the fresh comfrey plant matter in water for 3-6 weeks; strain the liquid and use it to water any plants that may need a mid-season boost of nutrition, or those that are looking stressed. The extra nitrogen in your comfrey compost tea will help to encourage better flowering and more vigorous growth in all sorts of plants.