

## **Coastal Mugwort by Kathleen Sayce**

Coastal Mugwort is a daisy, though you see this only by looking closely at the flowers, which are tiny, greenish white clusters along a long stem, without petals, lacking ray flowers, in the language of botany.

This particular species grows in the salt spray zone along the coast, in riprap walls, rocky cliffs, coarse gravels around estuaries, and on seacliffs along the ocean. It has jagged-toothed, bicolored leaves, green on one side, silver on the other, and is a herbaceous perennial, which is a precise way to say it dies down to a woody crown each fall, and sprouts each spring.

The tiny seeds ripen in small capsules, and when ripe, blow around on the wind. Seedlings germinate almost immediately afterwards, in late summer to early fall, and put down deep roots. I grew coastal mugwort one fall, and found that within weeks some seedlings had roots that were more than 12 inches deep. If you live on a rocky, windy salty cliff, this behavior is just the thing to make sure you anchor yourself quickly, and deeply, to your rocky home.

Coastal mugwort is in the genus *Artemisia*, members of which are also called sagebrush and wormwood. Yes, it has been used to deworm human sufferers. There are more than a dozen species in North America. Leaves, flowers and stems are used by many tribes for a wide variety of medical needs, including tinctures for colds, fevers, pain reduction, and others. The most famous member of this genus is absinthe, *Artemisia absinthium*, used to flavor a distilled drink of the same name.