Betony - Herb of Many Names

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Betony is also known as Wood Betony, Bishop's Wort, Common Hedgenettle, Lousewort, Purple Betony, or Woundwort. Native American tribes used New World Wood Betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*) for medicinal purposes. European settlers may have encountered the native species, but European Wood Betony (*Betonica officinalis*, formerly Stachys betonica) became established in colonial gardens and continues to be cultivated in Virginia gardens.

European Betony's purple flowers offer nectar and pollen to butterflies, bees, and pollinators from summer through Autumn. The plant thrives in rock gardens, containers, herb gardens, pollinator gardens, or cottage gardens, preferring full sun to partial shade in well-drained soil. A member of the mint family, it forms matted clumps that slowly reach 1 to 2 feet tall and wide. Once established, this plant resists drought. You can propagate European Betony by seeding in Fall or Spring. It also self-seeds readily and is easy to divide.



Photo by Laura Lemmon

Historically, both New World and European Betony were used for healing properties and in amulets for protection. A dooryard garden staple in colonial times, European Wood Betony is represented today in the Powhatan Historic Garden, where it is a favorite for its role as an attractive pollinator plant.

References:

https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/betonica-officinalis/