'Rupa, lunch is served, please come and eat! This was the fifth call Rupa's mother had made, but still there were no signs of her on the dining table. 'What are you up to? Can't you hear, I have been screaming my lungs out, calling you to have your lunch, what is it so important that you are missing your food also', saying this Rupa's mother entered her room where she found her deeply engrossed in a book. 'Yes mumma, please do not interrupt, I am just about to finish the book, after that, I'll come and eat', said Rupa, without lifting her eyes from the book, and her mother had no choice but to leave saying, 'then do not complain later that your food got cold, I am not going to rehear it'. Rupa nodded absently and soon was lost in the world of her book.

Half an hour later, when she emerged at the dining table, her smile said it all. Manu who was already sitting and chatting with her mother and Bantu mama, stopped midway to look at her in a quizzing way. 'Auntie told me that you were too engrossed in reading, so I did not come and disturb you, but will you please tell us the name of that interesting book, so I even can lay my hands on it', said Manu in a slightly jealous tone. 'Oh, come on, I was just reading 'Gulliver's Travels' for the fourth time, and found it as interesting as it was when I read it for the first time', said Rupa in a casual tone.

'How can you have the patience to read the same book four times', asked Manu. He was obviously looking surprised as he was more into science and real time stories rather than fiction. 'Well, you have to read this book and then give your opinion about it. And it's such an interesting read wherein the main character Gulliver's voyage to different lands is described in such a lucid style that you would not like to leave it till you come to the end', said Rupa with an air of 'know-it-all'. 'Oh, even I know about this Gulliver story where he goes to the land of Liliput', said Manu sounding a bit offended.

'Well, that is just the first part. Gulliver's voyage was in total four stages, and the final part is so absorbing when he gets abandoned in a landing boat and comes first upon a race of (apparently) hideous deformed and savage humanoid creatures to which he conceives a violent antipathy. Shortly thereafter he meets a horse and comes to understand that they call themselves Houyhnhnms (which in their language means "the perfection of nature"), and that they are the rulers, while the deformed creatures called Yahoos are human beings in their base form', informed Rupa.

Manu finally seemed interested, and with a sense of loss, he admitted that he had missed out on reading such a nice book. Bantu mama who was silently observing this chipped in, 'yes Manu, I'm sure that you will really like this book; also in the last part, there is a mention of an interesting plant which I am sure, can be motivating enough for you to pick the book. There is a mention of a magical herb Rue, or the Herb of Grace which is used by Gulliver in "Gulliver's Travels" (by Jonathan Swift) when he returns to England after living among the "Houyhnhnms". Gulliver can no longer stand the smell of the English Yahoos (people), so he stuffs Rue or tobacco in his nose to block out the smell. "I was at last bold enough to walk the streets in his (Don Pedro's) company, but kept my nose well with rue, or sometimes with tobacco" that's what Gulliver said. This information was sufficient enough for Manu to take a vow to read "Gulliver's Travels". Meanwhile, the children again settled down with Bantu mama to know more about the new herb.
The name *Ruta* is from the Greek *reuo* (to set free), because this herb is so efficacious in various diseases. It was much used by the Ancients; Hippocrates specially commended it, and it constituted a chief ingredient of the famous antidote to poison used by Mithridates. The Greeks regarded it as an antimagical herb, because it served to remedy the nervous indigestion they suffered when eating before strangers, which they attributed to witchcraft. In the Middle Ages and later, it was considered in many parts of Europe a powerful defence against witches, and was used in many spells. It was also thought to bestow second sight. Many spiritual paths have recognized the potency of rue: It apparently got the name Herb of Grace because early Christians used it as a tool for aspersing during exorcisms and before performing Mass, and this herb is the only one that the Prophet Mohammed blessed.

**Scientific classification**

- **Kingdom:** Plantae
- **Family:** Rutaceae
- **Genus:** Ruta
- **Species:** *R. graveolens*

**What are my Vernacular Names?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Garden Rue, Common Rue, Herb of Grace, Countryman’s Treacle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>Sadab, Shitaab, Sitab</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kannada</td>
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<td>Tamil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>Sadapaka, Aruda</td>
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</tbody>
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**Where can you find me?**

I am a native to the Balkan Peninsula, southeastern Europe. I am sometimes grown as an ornamental plant in gardens, especially because of my bluish leaves, and also sometimes for my tolerance of hot and dry soil conditions. I am also cultivated as a medicinal herb, as a condiment, and to a lesser extent as an insect repellent. I thrive well in open spaces and under bright sunlight.

**How do I look like?**

I am a hardy, evergreen, shrubby plant with tough, woody branches. My stem is woody in the lower part, my leaves are alternate, bluish-green, bi- or tripinnate, emit a
powerful, disagreeable odour and have an exceedingly bitter, acrid and nauseous taste. The first flower that opens has usually ten stamens, the others eight only. The greenish-yellow flowers are in terminal panicles, blossoming from June to September. After the flowers are fertilized, clusters of bumpy green four-lobed fruits are formed, containing numerous brown seeds. My whole plant has a disagreeable and powerful odour.

**Parts Used**
The aerial parts of the rue herb are generally used for its medicinal and commercial applications.

**What are my Medicinal Uses?**
- My leaves juice helps in clear and sharp eyesight, especially when the vision has become dim through over-exertion of the eyes.
- My leaf juice is used against ear ache.
- I am used as a medicine for treatment in hysterical affections, in coughs and in colic and flatulence, being a mild stomachic.
- I am used in treating chronic bronchitis.
- If a leaf or two be chewed, a refreshing aromatic flavour will pervade the mouth and any nervous headache, giddiness, hysterical spasm, or palpitation will be quickly relieved.
- I am also used to treat insect bites.
- My leaves have been used as an anti-spasmodic to cure cramps, a calmative or sedative, an emmenagogue that helps in increasing the menstrual flow as well as an abortifacient or a drug that causes abortion in women.
- I am also used to treat several other disorders such as a disease of the nervous system called multiple sclerosis and Bell's palsy.
- Chewing the leaves helps in imparting a flavor in the mouth that not only stays for a substantial period, but also helps to get rid of germs in the gums.
- My leaves extract helps in strengthening capillaries and veins thus reducing the likelihood of varicose veins and improving overall cardiovascular function.
- I am used as an antidote against all dangerous medicines or deadly poisons.
- In Tamil, I am known as Pullavalathi which means that I am used for growth in infants.
- Decoction of the whole plant is applied in back pain, lumbar, paralytic weakness. 500 gm Rue is boiled in 1.5 litre water for 30 minutes and filtered. Three millilitre extract is applied on the most affected part of the body, the same is used in earache also.
- My oil is recommended in herbal treatment of insomnia, headaches, nervousness, abdominal cramps, and renal troubles. It is a well-known emmenagogue. The plant may be part of sedative and hypnotic herbal preparations (rue oil is a commonly-used homoeopathic medicine as rubefacient, for certain dermatoses as eczemas and psoriasis), and as an antiviral agent when combined with other herbs. Applied or rubbed on the skin it has a rubefacient effect (for rheumatic pains).

**RUE EYEWASH**
Soak a few green rue leaves in boiled and filtered water overnight and use the medicated water next day as eyewash to refresh your red, dry and irritated eyes that have been over worked in front of a computer screen.