

## Calendula

Calendula officinalis

The word calendula is derived from the Latin calens meaning the first day of each month because the Romans claimed they bloomed the first of each month. Christians called it "marygold" and "marybud" because it bloomed at all the festivals celebrating the Virgin Mary, also because people believed by constant association with the flowers they could ward off evil. Calendula is known as the "herb of the sun" because the flowers open in the morning and close in the evening. Calendula should not be confused with Tagetes which are also called marigolds.

Calendula flowers are good to **use for conditions that need cooling** like scrapes, burns, wounds, cuts, bruises, acne, bee stings, sores, irritations, abrasions, cradle cap, diaper rash, earaches, skin eruptions, sore eyes cramps, ulcers, and bronchitis. Calendula is **astringent, antiseptic and antibacterial**. It can be made into teas and infusions for drinking, washing or for fomentations. Calendula flowers can be made into tinctures, poultices, salves, and balms. They can be infused into oil which is then soothing and healing for dry, inflamed and irritated skin. And you can eat them. The flowers can be used fresh, dried or frozen. An infusion can be used to treat thrush (candida) being taken both as a tea and used as a douche.

Calendula **poultices are very effective for healing cuts and scrapes, fever blisters, and cold sores**. They are also good for pulling the heat out of burns and infections and for soothing any kind of inflammation or skin irritation. These poultices work well on children to treat infected chicken pox. Making a poultice from the flowers is very simple. Just add a tablespoon or two of hot water to the flowers and mash together with a pestle. Place the mashed pulp directly on the affected area. If you will be moving around, you can cover the poultice with a bandage or gauze and tape. Change the poultice every half hour or so if you are drawing the heat out of a burn or infection.

To dry, simply lay your flowers out on a screen, paper, or cheesecloth in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight. Dry them until you are certain there is no more moisture in them. You may want to move them around daily to help them dry more evenly and quickly. Once dried you can store them in a jar or in a paper bag, taped shut. Stored in a cool dark place they will last for a full year. You can also store them in plastic ziplock bags in the freezer and just take out what you need.

Calendula flowers with their **anti-fungal** properties make good **foot soak**. Funguses can be very persistent and deep seated so soak the feet daily for a month or two to make sure the infection is fully cleared and healed. You may want to add a drop or two of tea tree oil into the soak. To make a foot bath, start by making a calendula infusion. Put 3/4 cup of calendula flowers in a quart jar and pour boiling water over them to fill the jar. Let it sit for about an hour. Strain it directly into the foot bath container and compost the flowers. Add some hot water to the infusion until it is deep enough to cover the feet. Soak feet for about 20 minutes.

The culinary use of calendula dates back to ancient Rome. Common people couldn't afford to buy saffron and they discovered that powdered calendula petals were an excellent substitute which is why it has been called "poor man's saffron". The practice of coloring butter made from autumn and winter milk--low in vitamin A and pale compared to spring butter--with skin-healing calendula was so common that butter became widely known as a burn ointment. The pigmentation of ornamental fish in captivity can be intensified by adding Calendula to regular fish food. Or you can throw the petals onto any dish or dessert to make it more colorful.

Sources: Kimberly Gallagher Learning Herbs and herbmentor.com  
Herbalpedia

## Chamomile

Anthemis nobilis (roman chamomile) and Matricaria recutita (german chamomile)

Chamomile tea has been recommended for generations as a mild tonic to aid **sleeplessness and stress**, as well as for **colds and cramps**. It is one of the herbs that is **safe for young children** and so is used for a wide range of common childhood complaints such as restlessness, colic, teething, whining, and fevers. A cup of chamomile tea can be enjoyed anyone in need of soothing their nerves, allaying stress and irritability, and promoting calmness. Chamomile's common genus name, Matricaria, speaks to its **affinity for women and mothers**. It can be used to bring on delayed menses, reduce uterine cramping, and relieve heartburn when pregnant. Chamomile flowers are used internally for many common physical symptoms, including **menstrual cramps, stomach cramps, indigestion, flatulence, diarrhea, fever, colds, congestion, headaches, insomnia, nausea, vomiting, stress, nervousness, and poor digestion**. It can be taken as a tea, tincture or in capsule form. To make a tea, steep one teaspoon of dried chamomile for ten minutes. For a more medicinal brew you can steep it for 30 minutes.

Externally, chamomile can be **used as a steam to relieve lung congestion**, as an anti-inflammatory for the skin, or as an anti-infective for cuts and scrapes. To use as a poultice to heal burns, rashes, or eczema grind the flowers into a paste with a mortar & pestle. Add a little water and oatmeal slowly as needed for consistency. The oats will help soothe the skin and keep the paste in place on the skin. This can then be wrapped with gauze if there will be a lot of moving around. Leave on for 10-30 minutes. Repeat as needed.

Sources: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/01/050104112140.htm>  
Rosalee de la Forêt Healing Herbs eBook, 2009 herbmentor.com

## Cleavers

Galium aparine

Cleavers (goose grass, catch weed, bedstraw, sticky willy) are a very valuable **tonic for the lymphatic system**. They may be used safely for problems such as **swollen glands**, tonsillitis and for adenoid trouble. Cleavers have been used historically for treating cysts, tumors and benign breast lumps because of their ability to **remove and drain poisons and infections from the lymph glands**. The coumarin content in cleavers is considered to have blood-thinning properties, which may be beneficial in reducing high blood pressure and blood clotting. Cleavers are also high in Vitamin C.

Taken internally as tea, juice, tincture or capsules, cleavers helps to stimulate perspiration and sweating, which cools the body, lowers fevers, and expels toxic wastes through the skin. For the urinary system it is helpful in the treatment of **cystitis and other urinary conditions**. It combines well with urinary demulcents (comfrey, licorice, marshmallow, slippery elm) for this purpose. And, for diuretic purposes, cleavers is often used with nettles, buchu Leaf or for stronger use combine with Uva Ursi. There is also a long tradition for the use of cleavers in the treatment of ulcers and tumors. This may be because of its ability for lymphatic drainage, which helps detoxify tissue. For support of the lymphatic system, combine cleavers with echinacea or calendula. For skin conditions, combine cleavers with yellow dock and burdock.

Cleavers is **best taken as a fresh juice or tea for cases of swollen lymph** and tumors. To make: wash the fresh herb and add it with water to a food processor, or blender. Strain the juice and drink a wineglassful a day. It can be mixed with other juices such as carrot, beet, or celery. It is possible to freeze the juice in ice trays, and defrost as required. Fresh herb juice or tea can be used

for skin conditions. Typically the tea or juice is applied topically to clean skin and left to dry.

Historically, a salve of cleavers for the skin has been made by mixing the fresh cleavers juice with butter and applying as needed. Coconut oil could also be used. Chopped fresh leaves applied directly to the inflamed area could also be used.

For infusion: take one ounce of dried extract, pour one pint of warm (not hot) water, and let infuse for 2 hours. Use from 2 to 8 tablespoons, 3-4 times per day.

As a tincture take 20-30 drops on average, diluted with water. 2-3x per day

Cleavers can cause constipation, as it's high in tannins which contract tissues. Prolonged use is not recommended, Use 2 weeks on with one week off if needed for chronic problems.

Because it is high in tanins cleavers makes an **excellent facial wash for tightening the skin**. To use bring one quart of water to a boil. Remove from heat and add 3-1/2 tbsp. of dried herb. Cover and steep for 40 min. Wash the face and neck often or use packs consisting of a wash cloth soaked in the tea, lightly wrung out and then applied to the entire facial area for up to 10 minutes several times a day. Either of these processes will help to tighten up wrinkles. Gradual results should become evident within 2 weeks.

Cleavers' botanical genus, Galium, is derived from the Greek word, gala, which means "milk" and is supposed to relate to the fact that the plant has the ability to curdle milk, which was beneficial in the making of cheese. Cleavers can be eaten as a vegetable. Try it in lasagna along with nettle leaves. It dries well and can be pulverized and placed into capsules for future use.

### **Cleavers infused oil for Breast Self-Massage**

Infused herbal oils are an important element of breast self-massage. When herbs are infused into oil, active plant components are liberated and can be massaged into breast tissue which contains many lymph nodes. The herbs can help reverse abnormal cellular changes such as hyperplasia, atypia, precancers, and in situ cancers. It's easy to make your own infused oils. This recipe comes from Catskill Mountain Herbals and is made with a blend of Dandelion flowers, St. John's Wort, Cleavers, Red Clover blossoms and Calendula blossoms in a base of organic olive oil with a hint of Lavender essential oil. Add beeswax if you prefer a salve to a massage oil.

sources: Deb Jackson & Karen Bergeron: Alternative Nature Online Herbal – [altnature.com](http://altnature.com)  
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## **Comfrey**

*Symphytum officinale*

Comfrey is from the Latin word conferta, meaning "to grow together". Comfrey is so named because it is used as a herbal remedy to **knit bones, mend lacerations, and heal wounds**. When comfrey is applied topically over a fractured bone, its prime element, allantoin, moves into the tissues below stimulating cells to divide at an increased rate, thus speeding up the healing and closing processes. When fresh comfrey leaves or roots are administered to sores, injuries or ulcers, the mucilage, or adhesive agents present in the herb, helps to heal the damaged skin. It first dries on the wound and then coagulates and contracts bringing the sides of the damaged skin closer and also slowing down infection. Always make sure the wound is clean before apply comfrey and **use only in**

**places where the wound is shallow as it may heal skin too quickly over a deep wound that needs first to drain and be cleared of all infection.**

A **poultice** prepared with comfrey leaves may be used to **heal blemishes, twists, sprains and strains, gout, arthritis, varicose veins, ulcers, swellings, burns and phlebitis** (inflammation of veins characterized by pain, swelling and change of skin color). An **infusion** prepared with the leaves serves as an effective **eyewash** for tender, inflamed eyes as well as a **cleanser for skin conditions like eczema, acne, psoriasis and boils**. Use as a salve or poultice on cuts, bruises, abrasions, and burns.

Comfrey leaves possess substantial therapeutic properties and are especially effective in healing digestive, respiratory and urinary problems. Used as an **infusion** the leaves of the herb act as a **soothing expectorant for dry coughs, bronchitis and pleurisy and are also used to cure sore throats and laryngitis**. Comfrey is also useful for treating **digestive problems**. The herb provides healing for gastric and duodenal ulcers, gastritis and may also be used to **lessen the inflammation** responsible for dysentery, diarrhea and ulcerative colitis. For treating the **urinary system**, it eases up spasms, comforts cystitis and, at the same time, helps get rid of inflammation. Herbal medicine practitioners recommend comfrey for treating **gout and arthritis**.

For internal use teas and tinctures of the leaves are best. There has been some controversy over the use of comfrey internally as the pyrrolizidine alkaloids in comfrey have been linked to liver problems when given in large doses to animals. This alkaloid is present primarily in the root. Do some research on your own. My view is that small doses of tincture or tea used over short periods of time are not harmful and can be tremendously helpful and external use is very beneficial. This is an herb that has been used for centuries by many people around the world. Mature comfrey plants can be harvested up to four or five times a year. They are ready for cutting when about 2 feet high. Comfrey will rapidly regrow, and will be ready for further cutting about 5 weeks later.

**For the garden** comfrey is a particularly **valuable source of compost**. Its very deep roots mine a host of nutrients from the soil. These nutrients are then made available through its fast growing leaves which quickly break down to a thick black liquid. Comfrey is an excellent source of potassium, an essential plant nutrient needed for flower, seed and fruit production. Its leaves contain 2-3 times more potassium than farmyard manure. There are various ways in which comfrey can be utilized as a fertilizer:

\*As a compost activator - include a few leaves of comfrey in the compost heap to add nitrogen and help to heat the heap. Comfrey should not be added in quantity as it will quickly break down into a dark sludgy liquid that needs to be balanced with more fibrous, carbon rich material.

\*A liquid fertilizer can be produced by either rotting leaves down in rainwater for 4–5 weeks to produce a ready to use 'comfrey tea', or by stacking dry leaves under a weight in a container with a hole in the base. When the leaves decompose a thick black comfrey concentrate is collected. This must be diluted at 15:1 before use.

\* Use as a mulch or side dressing - a 2 inch layer of comfrey leaves placed around a crop will slowly break down and release plant nutrients; it is especially useful for crops that need extra potassium, such as fruit bearers but also reported to do well for potatoes. Avoid using flowering stems as these can root.

Sources: wikipedia

[http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs\\_comfrey.htm](http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs_comfrey.htm)

## Dandelion

Taraxicum officinales

Dandelion was intentionally brought to North America by Europeans not wanting to leave such a valuable resource behind. **Every part of the dandelion can be used as food or medicine.** When the first spring leaves pop up out of the ground they can be harvested and eaten fresh as a spring tonic in salads, made into a delicious pesto, infused into vinegar or dried for tea. They **supply the body with vital nutrients** after the long, cold winter where fresh greens have been unavailable. The leaves contain potassium, magnesium, niacin, calcium, phosphorus, iron, sulphur, zinc, vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, B12, C and E.

The French call this plant pissenlit, which speaks to its **strong diuretic properties.** Dandelion is considered to be very safe as a diuretic as its high potassium content replaces the potassium lost in normal urine secretion. A tea of dandelion leaves or root is a great way to flush excess water from the system. Besides being nutritious and a diuretic, dandelion is **good for liver and gallbladder** complaints, **infections of the urinary tract**, and loss of appetite. The **bitter** taste of the leaves helps to **promote digestion** by stimulating bile which helps to break down fats and relieve indigestion. This also helps prevent gallstones from forming. Dandelion root is a great ally for the liver as it helps the liver with its process of detoxification. This makes it beneficial for diseases such as hepatitis. Dandelion root can help clear up acne and other **skin disruptions** which are caused by a stagnant liver. Most herbalists agree that **long-term use of dandelion is needed for the best results.** It can be taken as tincture, tea or eaten fresh in a variety of recipes.

Dandelion tea, whether made from the root or the leaves, makes a **good all around tonic** because it stimulates the body to eliminate waste and toxins while fortifying it with accessible vitamins and minerals. Because the leaves are rich in readily available magnesium and calcium, dandelion is also a good herb for improving bone health. Magnesium increases bone density, so dandelion may actually help to prevent bone disorders such as osteoporosis.

For a nutritious green juice blend two handfuls of the leaves with 1 pint of water, and liquidize then strain. Add carrot juice and/or apple juice to both sweeten the flavour and add to the nutrients. Dandelion vinegar is also a good way to take in its benefits this can be taken by the spoonful mixed with water in the morning or used on salads for extra benefit. Minerals extract best in vinegar and become even more available for the body to use.

Sources:

Rosalee de la Forêt Healing Herbs eBook, 2009 herbmentor.com

wikipedia

<http://www.safealternativemedicine.co.uk/DandelionNaturalHealing.html>

<http://www.naturalherbsguide.com/dandelion.html>

## Elder – flowers and berries

Sambucus nigra

It has been said, that the English summer has not arrived until the Elder is fully in flower, and that it ends when the berries are ripe. Elder is a bitter, pungent, cooling herb. The flowers and fruits help with **colds and flus** by **lowering fever**, reducing inflammation, soothing irritation and they have a **diuretic and anti-mucus** effect. The flowers are **diaphoretic** meaning that they produce perspiration which then cools the body. The berries are used as antioxidants, to lower cholesterol, to improve vision, to **boost the immune system**, to improve heart health and for **coughs, colds, flu, bacterial**

**and viral infections** and tonsillitis. Bioflavonoids and other proteins in the berries destroy the ability of cold and flu viruses to infect a cell. People with the flu who took elderberry reported less severe symptoms and recovered much faster than those who did not.

**For fever, peppermint, or yarrow is often combined with the elderflower** with good results. For the respiratory system elderflower is often used for chronic conditions as well as colds and flus. It works as an **expectorant** which means it can thin the mucus that's causing problems and help it be more easily expelled from the lungs. While there may be more coughing at first, the coughs will be clearing out the lungs. This is the case for both upper respiratory infections and for congestion that comes from seasonal **allergies and hay fever**. Elderflower will also boost your immune system so you'll have fewer problems with colds and other illnesses that get passed around. Regular consumption of elderflower infusion **taken prior to the onset of hay fever** season can reduce the severity of allergic reactions once the season begins. The flowers also have diuretic, laxative, anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties.

Elderflower **tincture** is good for **coughs, colds and flu, cooling** and lowering temperatures, stimulating elimination through perspiration and releasing congestion in the sinuses and upper respiratory tract. Combine with echinacea tincture as a remedy for ear infections. Elderflower tincture is also helpful in chronic catarrh and allergies. Take during the hayfever season along with nettle tincture to reduce the severity of attacks.

The **berries** have been found to have **strong anti-viral** properties and are useful for some of the virus strains that are sweeping the world each winter like the H1N1 virus. In Israel, Hasassah's Oncology Lab has determined that elderberry **stimulates the body's immune system** and they are treating cancer and AIDS patients with it. Making a syrup or tincture from the berries to be taken as **daily tonic during flu season** can be a good preventative measure. The fruits have also been used to make wine, and when cooked, can be used in pies and jams. The berries contain more vitamin C than any other herb except rosehips and black currant. Elderberry has a very high ORAC, or oxygen radical absorption capacity: over twice as much as blueberry and is high in antioxidants called flavonoids which stimulate the immune system. Other compounds in elderberry, called anthocyanins, have an anti-inflammatory effects which are helpful for aches, pains, and fever.

sources: <http://www.positivemedicine.co.uk>  
herbwisdom.com  
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## Lavender

*Lavendula officinalis* (angustifolia)

Folk wisdom tells us that lavender has many uses. Lavender was known to the ancient Romans, who named it from the Latin *lavens*, "to wash." Infusions of lavender **soothe and heal insect bites**. Bunches of lavender **repel insects**. When applied to the temples, lavender oil soothes **headaches**. In pillows, lavender flowers **aid sleep and relaxation**. An infusion of three flowerheads added to a cup of boiling water soothes and relaxes at bedtime. Bathing in lavender will help clear up **skin problems** and make your skin feel rejuvenated and leave you calm and ready for sleep. It is also good as a **hair rinse** to help reduce hair loss and dandruff.

Drunk as a tea, lavender is a natural treatment for **stress, anxiety** and headaches. It also soothes **stomach upsets and flatulence**, and cold lavender tea can be used as an effective **mouthwash**. The tea can also be used as a compress by soaking strips of bandage or sterile linen in the hot liquid until it can be wrung out and laid on the bruise or wound. The heat and the **antiseptic**

qualities of the lavender combine to treat the wound. A warm lavender compress placed on the chest can help congestion, while breathing in the steam of lavender (place the hot lavender tea in a bowl and cover your head with a towel) **helps breathing**.

Make an infusion of the fresh or dried flowers and leaf by pouring a pint of boiling water over one ounce of the dry leaf and flower. Steep (covered) for about ten minutes. Strain and sweeten to taste. Drink while still warm. Lavender tea may be taken throughout the day, up to three cups. It works well in combination with other medicinal herbs in infusions.

Lavender oil extract: In a glass container combine one ounce of freshly harvested lavender flowers with 1-1/2 pints of olive oil, sufficient to cover the herb. Place in a sunny windowsill for about three days, shaking the mixture daily. Strain through muslin or cheesecloth. Add more fresh flowers and repeat the process until the oil has the desired aromatic strength. Lavender extract can be safely used internally to treat migraines, and nervous indigestion. A few drops on a sugar cube can speed headache relief. Externally, a small amount of lavender oil, rubbed on sore joints, can relieve rheumatism.

Lavender **essential oil is gentle and effective**. It can be used for everyone including children and the elderly. It's **many uses** make it an important member of any first aid kit. It has **antiseptic, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-convulsive, and anti-depressant properties**. Lavender oil is one of the safest essential oils and can be used by adults full-strength on the skin. For children under 6 it is best to dilute it with a carrier oil such as olive or sweet almond oil. It can be applied **for cuts, scrapes, wounds, burns, bee, wasp, and insect stings, rashes, muscle aches, rheumatism, arthritis, cold sores, canker sores, blisters, bruises, athlete's foot**, and rubbed directly into the temples in case of **headache** or migraine. The essential oil has also been used to minimize scar tissue when applied to burned skin.

Clare Hanrahan: Lavender, Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine Apr 06, 2001

Gail Kavanagh The Healing Powers of Lavender

<http://www.doityourself.com/stry/maintainperennials#ixzz0regQDdU1>

wikipedia

## Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis

Lemon Balm was dedicated to the goddess Diana, and used medicinally by the Greeks some 2,000 years ago. In the Middle Ages lemon balm was used to soothe tension, to dress wounds, as a cure for toothache, skin eruptions, mad dog bites, crooked necks, and sickness during pregnancy. It was even said to prevent baldness. Traditionally lemon balm has been used for earache, bronchial inflammation, fever, gas, headaches, high blood pressure, flu, mood disorders, palpitations, toothache and vomiting. A tea made from Lemon balm leaves is said to **soothe menstrual cramps and helps relieve PMS**. Lemon balm is widely used to **uplift moods, treat anxiety, insomnia and stress**. In a recent research study it was found to greatly increase the ability to concentrate and perform word and picture tasks.

Medicinally, lemon balm is used as a tea for **fevers, to help digestion, and for tension headache**. The tea is taken to treat **colds and flu**, lower blood pressure and for insomnia and indigestion. It is a carminative herb that relieves spasms in the digestive tract, and is used in cases of **gas**. The volatile oils in this plant appear to act between the digestive tract and nervous system. It may be helpful for migraines that are associated with tension, neuralgia, anxiety induced palpitations, and/or insomnia. Lemon balm has a **tonic effect on the heart and circulatory system** causing mild

vasodilation of the peripheral vessels, thus lowering blood pressure. It can be used in feverish conditions such as influenza. Hot water extracts have **anti-viral** properties. This is a safe herb for children, and it tastes very good.

Lemon balm has been studied as an effective anti-viral especially for the **herpes virus**. Research has shown that the plant contains polyphenols which can help significantly in the treatment of **cold sores, shingles** and other viral afflictions. Studies show a significant reduction in the duration, severity, and a reduction in the frequency of recurrence of herpes when lemon balm is used. When applied to cold sores or genital sores caused by the herpes simplex virus, creams or ointments containing lemon balm have speeded healing. The infections did not spread as much and individuals using topical lemon balm also reported more relief from symptoms such as itching and redness. Lemon balm is used in Europe for treating thyroid problems and has shown an ability to regulate thyroid hormone production. This ability, along with the herbs anti-viral characteristics have made the herb useful in the treatment of **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**. For this reason it should also **be avoided by those on thyroid medication** or discussed with a physician first.

The essential oil is used in aromatherapy for depression, melancholy, and nervous tension. Externally in salve, it has been effective in relieving symptoms of herpes simplex, sores, and painful swellings. Lemon balm is currently being studied along with sage as herbs with memory-improving properties. In one study researchers found that using lemon balm improved memory and lengthened attention span in individuals suffering from Alzheimer's disease. This may be due to its **antioxidants**, which protect cells from damage caused by oxidation. Another study used lemon balm, to calm overexcited individuals suffering from dementia. Dementia is an increasing deficiency in thought processes caused by brain damage such as from a stroke or disease such as Alzheimer's disease.

Lemon balm makes a good skin cleanser. Steamy facials are recommended for acne. Dry leaves are used in potpourri. Lemon balm contains volatile oils which are known to have **bug repellent** and sedative properties. As an insect repellent it can be blended with other herbs such as lavender, lemongrass and holy basil.

Lemon balm makes both a **delicious beverage and medicinal tea**. Fresh leaves can be chopped and added to green salads, fruits salads, marinated vegetables, fish marinades and sauces, herb butters, fruit drinks, and sorbets. It goes well with broccoli, asparagus, lamb, fish, and shellfish. Combine it with other lemon herbs such as lemon thyme, lemon basil, and lemon verbena and add to vinegar. It is one of the ingredients in Benedictine and Chartreuse liqueurs. It can also be used in egg dishes, custards, soups and casseroles. It works well in stuffings for poultry, lamb or pork. Lemon balm and chervil are also good combination.

**For children:** Lemon balm's sedative effects are so mild that it is safe to give it to fussy children when they cannot sleep. Just heat some milk and add 2 tsp dried lemon balm to each cup. Allow it to steep for about 10 minutes and then strain it and add honey, or whatever sweetener your child prefers.

Lemon balm **may interact with sedatives and thyroid medications**. If you are taking prescription sedatives (for insomnia or anxiety) or medications to regulate your thyroid, ask your doctor before taking lemon balm.

Sources: herbwisdom.com

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## Nettle

Urtica dioica

Stinging nettle is a gently acting, **nourishing herb that is powerfully healing** for many complaints. David Hoffman says, "**When in doubt, give nettles.**" Nettles **nourish and support the entire body, particularly the endocrine, immune, urinary, respiratory, and circulatory systems.** Nettle root is a kidney ally and lymphatic/immune strengthener and is used for prostate problems. Nettle is used often used as a treatment for asthmatic allergies and "nervous" eczema. It is also an effective remedy for dust and pollen related allergies / hay fever and is highly beneficial to the respiratory system in general. It has a long history of use in treatments for bronchitis, whooping cough, colds, tuberculosis and related lung problems.

Drinking a nettle infusion on a regular basis will help **clear out toxins from your joints.** Nettle has a long history of use for arthritis, rheumatism and gout, and is effective at treating other inflammatory conditions such as tendonitis and bursitis. **A cleansing tea, especially beneficial to the liver, kidneys and the circulatory system,** can be made by infusing 1 teaspoon of dried nettle to one cup of freshly boiled water - leave to infuse covered for at least 5 minutes. It blends particularly well with lemon balm and tastes delicious with a dash of fresh lemon juice. Because nettle is beneficial to the kidneys it is no surprise that it's also a good a remedy for [and preventative of kidney stones. It also works for **bladder infections** - and it's a gentle and **safe herb** so you can easily drink several cups of nettle tea a day or a daily nourishing nettle infusion. It will help flush out toxins and support your kidneys, liver and circulatory and respiratory systems.

Herbalists often use nettles for **women's health.** It is the richest plant source of **folic acid,** which is vital for fetal health. Nettle tea provides **calcium, iron and vitamin K.** The protein, vitamins and minerals in nettles **enrich breast milk.** A nettle infusion is helpful in cases, of **anemia** especially where it is a result of heavy menstrual bleeding. It is a good tea for women during their periods when it will help remedy **bloating and breast tenderness,** as well as heavy periods - and its iron content is an added bonus.

For **skin conditions** dried nettles make a healing addition to facial steams, and a nettle tea makes a good wash for acne, boils, and oily skin. Nettles, with their high calcium content, are also **great for the hair.** So, if you're making tea make some extra and use it as a hair rinse. Nettle infused cider vinegar, made by steeping nettles in cider vinegar for a few weeks, is also good as a hair rinse or for a mineral rich salad dressing. Of course, drinking (or eating) nettles will also help improve hair condition.

Nettle is an **alterative** which means it alters or changes the body over time. This is also the relationship it has with plants which grow around it. In experimental conditions, nettle increased the production of oil in peppermint plants and increased the richness of soil when they were introduced into existing rows of aromatic plants. Nettles tend to draw up many of the nutrients in the soil where they grow, resulting in a plant that is rich in minerals and vitamins, including calcium, iron, sulphur and silica, beta-carotene, vitamins C, D and A and chlorophyll. Like comfrey, nettles when steeped in water to make a compost tea, make a **rich plant food** that can be used straight to spray on foliage to deter pests and prevent fungal diseases, or used diluted to water the plants and enrich the soil. Nettle can also be added to the compost heap where its nitrogen will assist in the breaking down of other plant matter. It has been reported that herbs with growing stinging nettles as neighbors tend to be healthier than those without and have a higher concentration of essential oils, making them more resilient to pests.

For a nutritious addition to your meals try steaming or cooking the fresh young nettle-tops, in

much the same way as you would spinach, and serve as a vegetable garnished with butter. Or, use them as an ingredient for a healthy soup, added to a vegetarian lasagne or pasta bake. The French are so passionate about the stinging nettle that they make it not only into the soup, but use it also for omelets and sauces.

### Nettle Soup

from "Food for Free" by Richard Mabey

4 large handfuls of nettle tops

1 large onion

50 g (2 oz) butter

2 potatoes

2 pints of vegetable stock

1 tablespoon of creme fraiche

Seasoning, including grated nutmeg

1. Strip the nettles from the thicker stalks, and wash.
2. Melt the butter and simmer the chopped onion until golden.
3. Add the nettles and the chopped potatoes and cook for two to three minutes.
4. Add the stock, and simmer for 20 minutes, using a wooden spoon from time to time to crush the potatoes.
5. Add the seasoning, plus a little grated nutmeg and serve with a whirl of creme fraiche
6. Or, if you would prefer a smoother soup, put the mixture through a liquidizer first. Reheat, and add seasoning and creme fraiche.

Sources: A.J. Ahlberg-Venezia Wise Woman Wisdom :Nettles and Seaweed

[http://www.susunweed.com/herbal\\_ezine/march04/wisewoman.htm](http://www.susunweed.com/herbal_ezine/march04/wisewoman.htm)

<http://www.gaias-garden.co.uk/herbs/Nettle.html>

### Plantain

Plantago major and Plantago lanceolata

Plantain is one of the most well-known and well-documented herbal medicines in cultures throughout the world. Its mild **antibiotic and antiseptic** properties make it an excellent **all-around natural remedy**. Its leaves can be consumed raw, as a cooked green, dried as a tea, or in tincture form. It is **rich in vitamins B1 and riboflavin**. It is an important plant for any household medicine chest and an easy one to teach kids to use for **cuts, scrapes, bites and stings** when they are out playing. The leaves are antibacterial, astringent, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antitussive, demulcent, diuretic, expectorant, hemostatic, laxative, ophthalmic, and vermifuge. Medical evidence confirms plantain's use as a medicine for **asthma, bladder problems, bronchitis, fever, hypertension, rheumatism and blood sugar control**. A decoction of the roots is used in the treatment of a wide range of complaints including diarrhea, dysentery, gastritis, peptic ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, hemorrhage, hemorrhoids, cystitis, bronchitis, catarrh, sinusitis, coughs, asthma and hay fever. It also causes a natural aversion to tobacco and is currently being used in preparations to stop smoking.

Antibacterial properties present in the plant, along with its astringent qualities, make it an effective **treatment for bleeding cuts and wounds**. It will help to stop bleeding and encourages the repair of damaged tissue. The heated leaves are used as a **poultice** for wounds, skin inflammations, malignant ulcers, cuts, stings and swellings and said to promote healing without scars. A poultice of hot leaves is bound onto cuts and wounds to **draw out thorns, splinters and inflammation**. For quick use when no heating is possible chew a few leaves to activate them then put the pulp directly on the sting, bite, cut, scrape or wound.

The root is said to be used as an anti-venom for rattlesnakes bites. The chemical analysis of *Plantago major* reveals the glycoside Aucubin which has been reported in the Journal Of Toxicology as a powerful **anti-toxin**. One of the best emergency field measures for wasp or bee sting (or snakebite), is to chew up a leaf or two and apply it directly. Then dig up the root, clean it mash it and use this as poultice. Plantain draws while counteracting poisons and relieving inflammation. It is also used for spider and all other **venomous bites**. It can be used internally as tea, tincture or in capsules in conjunction with the external application.

Plantain contains 'alantoin', which is also found in Comfrey. Alantoin has been shown to **promote healthy new cell growth** in tissue. Plantain is a **cooling herb good for all conditions of inflammation**. Internally, the fresh-herb tincture or tea is used for inflammations of the mouth, throat, lungs, digestive and urinary tracts, middle-ear infections, facial pain, tooth pain, as a tonic for chronic kidney and urinary tract conditions such as painful urination, incontinence and bedwetting. Plantain is also an **anti-mucous herb that aids in alleviating allergic conditions**, sinus/hayfever, coughs with irritation, bronchitis, asthma, children's mucousy conditions, eczema and other skin conditions with irritation like boils (use both internally and externally).

Plantain is a perennial herb considered a noxious weed by some and a miracle plant by others. Native Americans called it "footprint of the white man" because it grows where the soil has been disturbed. There is hardly a lawn, garden, or vacant lot that does not have plantain. It is an important food plant for the caterpillars of many species of butterflies.

Here is a simple recipe for healing salve:

#### **PLANTAIN SALVE**

- 1 oz dried plantain leaves
- 1 cup vegetable oil or enough to cover the leaves
- 1 oz beeswax

Cook on very low heat in a non-metal pot for 2 hours strain while still hot and add wax. When wax has melted pour into containers. It will make about 8 oz.

When cool it can be used for burns, bites, rashes and sores, and also as a facial night cream.

Sources: Article by Deb Jackson & Karen Bergeron <http://www.altnature.com/gallery/plantain.htm>  
Three Weeds to Keep: Cleavers, Goldenrod, and Plantain  
<http://herbalproperties.suite101.com/article.cfm/three-weeds-to-keep#ixzz0rgPCvD00>

## **Yarrow**

*Achillea millefolium*

Yarrow is an aromatic **bitter**, ideal **for excessive eating** of heavy foods during the holidays, mild stomach indigestion, **to relieve bloated feeling**, for **flatulence**, and nausea. Yarrow is a **diaphoretic**; it makes you sweat like a sauna in a bottle. This can be useful for cleaning your skin, and unclogging your pores. This can also be useful in **beginning stages of colds and flus** to sweat them out before they can settle in. It has been used since antiquity for headaches, fevers, diarrhea, anemia, palpitations, excessive menstruation, for intestinal and gallbladder complaints, toothache (chew the leaves), lack of appetite, catarrhs of the digestive system, hyperacidity, nervousness, nosebleed, anorexia, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, to stop bleeding, and sleep disturbances. It has been said that yarrow produces a feeling of peace and relaxation for women in menopause, and is a tonic. Yarrow, either as a tea or as a bath additive, has proved helpful in allaying rheumatic pain and control of high blood pressure. Yarrow **intensifies the medicinal action of other herbs** taken with it, and **helps eliminate toxins from the body**.

**For colds and flu** drink 1-2 quarts of very **strong yarrow infusion** at the onset of symptoms. This will usually halt all further symptom progression. The emphasis here is **AT ONSET**. Strong Yarrow infusion consumed after flu or a cold has progressed for several days will help reduce fever and induce sweating, but only modestly reduce other symptoms. The best way to use it is to drink the hot tea followed by a steamy shower, sauna, or bath, then bundle up with lots of blankets in bed with more tea and a couple hours of reading a good book. This will help you sweat out the cold or flu before it gets going.

If you steep the flowers only, you will get an aromatic that tastes good and is not bitter. If you boil the flowers, or if you use the whole plant, you will have an aromatic bitter that will be stronger for stomach problems and other complaints. Yarrow makes an excellent astringent mouth wash to tighten gums.

A **poultice** of fresh or dried leaves can be applied **directly onto shallow wounds**, especially those such as **scrapes, popped blisters, or burns**, where the skin was not broken and only clear serum is oozing. To make: first remove the finely branched portions of the leaves from the central rib, grind fresh or dried leaves, and apply directly to wounds. A good, strong, scab usually forms as the yarrow bits dry to close the wound. Healing is accelerated by topical yarrow dressings and poultices. For easy use keep a jar of dried and **powdered yarrow** leaves well-labeled and ready **for first aid** treatment of open wounds and popped blisters, burns, and shallow shaving wounds. This medicine keeps well in airtight, dark containers for at least five years with no apparent loss of healing efficacy. The powder **can be sprinkled on wounds to stop bleeding, to dull pain, and as an antiseptic herb to prevent infection.**

Externally, a **wash of yarrow tea**, with its mild disinfecting and soothing qualities, is useful for **general rashes and skin irritations**. It may work when the others fail on certain irritations. Yarrow is used for its astringent, healing and soothing effects on the skin. It strengthens skin tone. It can be used as a wash for oily skin, acne, large pores, wrinkles and eczema. To make a Facial Toner, add 2.5% Yarrow Tincture to your Recipes. Yarrow Tincture can be added to Compresses, Skin Toners, Baths, Ointments, Gels and Creams.

Use yarrow tea or tincture in hair care products for its strengthening, drying and healing properties. Yarrow has a drying effect on the scalp, so only use in products for oily hair. Used as a hair rinse, it is effective for treating dandruff, itchiness and small wounds on the scalp. It has also been shown to help counteract hair loss. Regular use of the hair rinse will gently bleach the hair.

Due its astringent, hemostatic (blood-stopping), antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, yarrow tincture has a wide range of uses. It can be used for all the conditions mentioned above and you can spray yarrow tincture on the skin where ever there is an infection. Daily or even more frequently is fine. Be aware that the alcohol may cause it to sting. The tincture can be mixed with some hot water to evaporate the alcohol and then sprayed. Mix 1 or two droppers full with a half a cup of boiling water and let sit for 5 minutes before spraying.

To make an insect repellent mix yarrow tincture with some water and essential oils of - lavender, catnip, holy basil, and lemongrass

Sources: Rosalee de la Foret: Learning Herbs.com  
Howie Brounstein <http://home.teleport.com/~howieb/howie.html>  
Ryan Drum - <http://www.ryandrum.com/>

## Yellow Dock

Rumex crispus

Yellow dock leaves have long been used as a remedy **for the sting of nettles**. Yellow Dock root is used in treating conditions of the **blood and glandular system especially when discharges** are present. The root has a **strong purifying effect** on the body and can help to **stimulate a bowel movement** within a few hours of consuming it while also **soothing inflammation** of the intestinal lining. The root is known for soothing irritation in the respiratory system, **invigorating the liver**, **healing poor absorption of nutrients** by the body as well as alleviating wind. Additionally, yellow dock root possess **diuretic** functions which enhance urine production and removes toxins from the body through the urinary system. Because of this yellow dock roots are beneficial for healing gout (accumulation of uric acid crystals in the joints), cystitis (inflammation of the bladder), water retention, and urinary stones.

Its purifying and liver stimulating properties make it a good medication for skin problems like weeping eczema, psoriasis, boils and abscesses. It is effective in **activating clogged blood and lymph** especially when mixed with cleavers. The herb is useful for women **for healing unbalanced menstrual cycles**, heavy bleeding during periods, menstrual pain and also as fibroids in the uterus. Yellow dock is **not recommended during pregnancy**.

Yellow dock roots are **rich in iron** which has earned it a reputation as a **reinvigorating remedy** that is good **for anemia** and restoring health due to its iron content as well as its beneficial action on the liver and digestion. Yellow dock is often used for curing general weakness or loss of strength **during convalescence**. Its calming and healing effects make it a good choice for all types of swollen or irritating skin conditions. To heal skin problems, mix a yellow dock decoction with a tea made of calendula and cleavers drinking 2-3 cups per day. Or use 50 drops (2 droppersful) of yellow dock tincture taken 3x daily for one week. Decrease dosage to half if you find the laxative effects too pronounced or use the decoction externally as a wash instead. Using the cooled decoction as a wash will help to alleviate itching and inflammation in skin problems.

A decoction or tincture prepared from yellow dock root is a gentle **laxative** and helps heal constipation. To prepare the decoction: boil one qt. of water, reduce the heat and add one cup of sliced fresh or dry root. Simmer for around 15 minutes then allow to steep for one hour. Strain the liquid, sweeten it with honey if desired. For constipation drink up to four cups in a day for no more than a week. Drinking a cup of warm tea is beneficial after a rich or heavy meal to aid digestion as it assists the liver to break down the fats as well as invigorates the colon.

A syrup prepared from yellow dock can be used for alleviating problems of the upper respiratory system.

- 4 cups (1 liter) water
- 2 lb (300 g) fresh yellow dock roots
- 2 cups (500 g) wildflower honey

Slowly boil the roots until half the water has evaporated. Strain and mix the honey into the hot liquid. Store in the refrigerator. It's ideal for treating respiratory ailments. This syrup may be taken one teaspoon at a time 3-4 x per day to help with bronchitis, asthma as well as to ease tickling or scratching in the throat or the lungs.

Sources: [herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs\\_yellowdock.htm](http://herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs_yellowdock.htm)  
<http://www.answers.com/topic/yellow-dock-1>

## Glossary

alkalinizer – reduces acidity in the blood by making it more alkaline

anti-spasmodic - reduces muscle spasms

anti-tussive - a substance that is used to suppress coughing.

astringent - contracts and tightens tissues

bitter – bitter herbs and greens are typically good for liver, gall bladder and aid digestion

carminative - expelling gas from the stomach or intestines to relieve flatulence or abdominal pain or bloating

catarrh - inflammation of a mucous membrane, esp. of the respiratory tract, accompanied by excessive secretions.

demulcent - soothing to tissues

diaphoretic - induces sweating

digestive - aids digestion

diuretic – increases urination

dyspepsia - disturbed digestion; indigestion

emollient – softening and soothing to the skin

expectorant – helps expel mucus from the lungs

febrifuge - reduces fever

fomentations - the application of warmth and moisture, as to relieve pain.

hemostatic - acting to arrest bleeding or hemorrhage

laxative – relieves constipation, promotes bowel movement

mucilaginous – soothing to mucous membrane, skin, and tissues

nervine - relaxing, soothing for nervous system

nutritive - nourishing

ophthalmic - relating to the eye

palpitations - an unusually or abnormally rapid or violent beating of the heart.

shingles - an acute viral infection characterized by inflammation of the sensory ganglia of certain spinal or cranial nerves and the eruption of vesicles along the affected nerve path. It usually strikes only one side of the body and is often accompanied by severe neuralgia. Also called herpes zoster .

styptic - slows or stops bleeding by contracting tissue

tonic - invigorates and strengthens

vasodilation - dilatation of the blood vessels

vermifuge - serving to expel worms or other animal parasites from the intestines,

vulnerary – promotes the healing of wounds