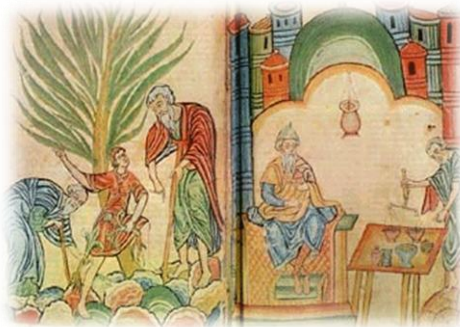




HERBAL MEDICINE

The ability to synthesize a wide variety of chemical compounds that are used to perform important biological functions, and to defend against attack from predators such as insects, fungi and herbivorous mammals is called *herbal medicine*. Many of these phytochemicals have beneficial effects on long-term health when consumed by humans, and can be used to effectively treat human diseases. At least 12,000 such compounds have been isolated so far; a number estimated to be less than 10% of the total.

The use of plants for medicinal purposes is as old as civilization, and the first known written record of curative plants was from a Sumerian herbal of 2200 BC. The Greek doctor Hippocrates listed some 400 herbs in common use in the 5th century BC, and Dioscorides, in the first century AD, wrote an encyclopedia about herbal medicine. The work presents about 600 plants which became the basis for many later works. One of the most popular herbals ever was written by Culpeper in the seventeenth century.



During the Dark Ages, superstition combined with ignorance bestowed magical properties on plants, sometimes with minimal reason, and elaborate rituals were devised to preserve the mystery and magic.

Man has also been aware of the effects of scent on the body, mind and emotion from the beginning of civilization. Flowers were utilized to attract love, food and protection. Fragrant plants were worn to heal the body. The most costly flowers were offered to gods and goddesses as sacrifices, and the use of aromatic incense is recorded from the earliest of times.

Worldwide, from antiquity to modern times, different cultures have found common as well as diverse uses for herbs and oils, and the myths, legends, folklore and medicines reflect this knowledge.

HERBS USED IN HERBAL MEDICINE

Herbal medicine is the oldest and still the most widely used system of medicine in the world today. It is medicine made exclusively from plants.

A herb is a plant or plant part (such as leaves, roots or flowers) used for its scent, flavor, or therapeutic properties. Each part can have different medicinal uses and the many types of chemical constituents require different extraction methods. Both fresh and dried plant matter are used, depending on the herb. Herbal medicines are one type of dietary supplement. They are sold as tablets, capsules, powders, teas, extracts, and fresh or dried plants. People use herbal medicines to try to maintain or improve their health.

Using plants as medicine provides significant advantages for treating many conditions. The therapeutic activity of a plant is due to its complex chemical nature with different parts of the plant providing certain therapeutic effects.

There are many home health remedies that are simple to make or take at home and that can truly build vitality or even lessen the severity of an illness. Many of these are recipes passed down from our grandmothers and have been used for hundreds of years. Even though many of these health remedies are folk medicine, their effectiveness has been backed up by science.

One of the advantages of herbal medicine is that many herbs are easy to grow. In fact, a number of medicinal plants commonly are grown as ornamentals.



DANDELION

Taraxacum officinale



It can be found growing in lawns, on roadsides, on disturbed banks and shores of water ways, and other areas with moist soils. Common dandelion is well known for its yellow flower heads that turn into round balls of silver tufted fruits that disperse in the wind.

These balls are called "blowballs" or "clocks".

Empiric traditional application in humans of dandelion, in particular to treat digestive disorders, is supported by pharmacological investigations. Several studies have demonstrated further health-promoting properties of either dandelion extracts or individual compounds extracted from dandelion leaves or roots, e.g. anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic and anti-oxidative activities. Dandelion has been used in herbal medicine in an attempt to treat infections, bile and liver problems, and as a diuretic. Dandelion is used in herbal medicine as a mild laxative, for increasing appetite, and as a plant bitter for improving digestion. The milky latex has been used as a mosquito repellent and as a folk remedy to treat warts.



GREATER CELANDINE

Chelidonium majus



The whole plant is toxic in moderate doses, use in herbal medicine requires the correct dose. The effect of the fresh herb is as a mild analgesic, cholagogic, antimicrobial, oncostatic, and central nervous system sedative. The aerial parts and roots of greater celandine are used in herbalism. The above-ground parts are gathered during the flowering season and dried at high temperatures. The root is harvested in autumn between August and October and dried. The fresh rhizome is also used.

Celandine has a hot and bitter taste. This herb has been recognized as a useful detoxifying agent. The root has been chewed to relieve toothache. It was formerly used by some Romani people as a foot refresher; modern herbalists use its purgative properties. It is also traditionally used in the treatment of gallstones and dyspepsia.



LINGONBERRY

Vaccinium vitis-idaea



In folk medicine, *V. vitis-idaea* has been used as an apéritif, astringent, antihemorrhagic, anti-debilitative, depurative, antiseptic (especially for the urethra), a diuretic, a tonic for the nervous system, and in various ways to treat breast cancer, diabetes mellitus, rheumatism, and various urogenital conditions. In traditional Austrian medicine the fruits have been administered internally as jelly or syrup for treatment of disorders of the gastrointestinal tract, kidneys and urinary tract, and fever. The berries contain plentiful organic acids, vitamin C, vitamin A (as beta carotene), B vitamins (B1, B2, B3), and the elements potassium, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus. Lingonberry is used for urinary tract problems including irritation, kidney stones, and infections. It is also used for increasing urine production (as a diuretic). Other uses include treating gout, arthritis, and infections caused by viruses. Lingonberry leaves are sometimes used as a substitute for bearberry leaves.



MINT

Mentha



Mint is a popular herb that can be used fresh or dried in many dishes and infusions. Mint oil is often used in toothpaste, gum, candy, and beauty products. Mint has one of the highest antioxidant capacities of any food. Learning how to use fresh herbs and spices such as mint to add flavor when cooking can also help to cut down on sodium intake.

Mint is a calming and soothing herb that has been used for thousands of years to aid with upset stomach or indigestion. Mint is thought to increase bile secretion and encourage bile flow, which helps to speed and ease digestion (and which may also support healthy cholesterol levels). Peppermint is also thought to relieve pain and discomfort from gas and bloating. Peppermint tea is a common home remedy for flatulence. When applied topically in oil, ointment or lotion, mint has the effect of calming and cooling skin affected by insect bites, rash or other reactions. Mint is a natural anti-microbial agent and breath freshener.

NETTLE

Urtica dioica



The plant has a long history of use as a source for traditional medicine, food, tea, and textile raw material in ancient societies.

U. dioica herb has been used in the traditional Austrian medicine internally (as tea or fresh leaves) to treat disorders of the kidneys and urinary tract, gastrointestinal tract, locomotor system, skin, cardiovascular system, hemorrhage, influenza, rheumatism, and gout.

Urtication, or flogging with nettles, is the process of deliberately applying stinging nettles to the skin in order to provoke inflammation. An agent thus used is known as a rubefacient (something that causes redness). This is done as a folk remedy for treatment of rheumatism.



POT MARIGOLD

Calendula officinalis



It is probably native to southern Europe, though its long history of cultivation makes its precise origin unknown, and it may possibly be of garden origin.

Flowers were used in ancient Greek, Roman, Middle Eastern, and Indian cultures as a medicinal herb, as well as a dye for fabrics, foods, and cosmetics. Many of these uses persist today. They are also used to make oil that protects the skin. Marigold leaves can also be made into a poultice that helps scratches and shallow cuts to heal faster, and can help prevent infection.



SAGE

Salvia officinalis



Salvia officinalis is a perennial, evergreen subshrub, with woody stems, grayish leaves, and blue to purplish flowers. Some research has suggested certain extracts of *salvia officinalis* may have positive effects on human brain function.

Sage has antimicrobial effects, which can neutralize microbes that promote dental plaque. It's believed that compounds in sage have estrogen-like properties, allowing them to bind to certain receptors in your brain to help improve memory and treat hot flashes and excessive sweating. The leaves of common sage have been used traditionally as a remedy against diabetes.



ST. JOHN'S WORT

Hypericum perforatum

The red, oily extract of *H. perforatum* has been used in the treatment of wounds for millennia, including by the Knights Hospitaller, the Order of St John, after battles in the Crusades, which is most likely where the name came from. Taking St. John's wort extracts by mouth improves



mood and decreases nervousness and tiredness related to depression. Applying an ointment containing St. John's wort three times daily for 16 days seems to improve wound healing and reduce scar formation after a Cesarean section. St. John's wort can be effective in treating wounds, bruises, burns, and sores.

VALERIAN

Valeriana officinalis



Valerian is a perennial flowering plant native to Europe and Asia. In the summer when the mature plant may have a height of 1.5 metres, it bears sweetly scented pink or white flowers that attract many fly species.

Crude extract of valerian root may have sedative and anxiolytic effects, and is commonly sold in dietary supplement capsules to promote sleep. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved the health claim that valerian can be used as a traditional herbal medicine to relieve mild nervous tension and to aid sleep. Valerian can suppress muscle spasms. It inhibits human uterine muscle contractions in cell-based studies. Valerian strengthened blood vessels and improved elasticity, which benefits heart health.



YARROW

Achillea millefolium



The genus name *Achillea* is derived from mythical Greek character, Achilles, who reportedly carried it with his army to treat battle wounds.

A.millefolium has seen historical use as in traditional medicine, often because of its astringent effects. The herb is purported to be a diaphoretic, astringent, tonic, stimulant and mild aromatic. Yarrow's bitter components and fatty acids encourage proper bile secretion from the gallbladder, which can then improve digestion and keep gallstones from forming. Yarrow can also help regulate menstrual periods, particularly controlling heavy flow. Not only can it help stop wounds from bleeding, but it can be used as first aid for ulcers. Applying dried or powdered yarrow leaves inside nostrils may help stop the bleeding.

