



WILD ROSE
College of Herbal Medicine



Yarrow

Achillea millefolium



Description & Harvesting: A native perennial upright, aromatic herb, with tough, erect, furrowed woody stems, 30 - 70 cm high, growing from a creeping rhizome. The composite flower head is shaped in an umbel.

The flowers are usually white, rarely pink, faint brown, light purple or yellow. Each flower is about 4-6 mm in diameter. The finely divided alternate leaves are 5-12 cm long, bi- and tri-pinnate, accounting for its Latin name meaning 'thousand-leaf', and covered with woolly hairs. Yarrow has a characteristic odour. Yarrow grows widely throughout the world including in Asia, Britain, Canada, China, Denmark, Europe, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA. Yarrow grows in meadows, pastures, lawns etc. on all but the poorest soils. It may become a troublesome weed in gardens.

History & Folklore: The genus name comes from its use by the Greek hero Achilles during the Trojan Wars to stop bleeding from wounds. Achilles learned how to use it from his mentor, Chiron. This makes it both for the wounded warrior and the wounded healer. The second part of the name refers to the fine, feathered appearance of the leaves, which seem to be made up of a million little leaflets.

This plant seems to have been in use from quite ancient times. Yarrow is used mostly as a diaphoretic. It has been used to treat flus, fevers, and open sores. It has also been used to equalize circulation and increase elimination of waste materials in the blood. It is considered a tonic for the

Other names: Milfoil, Old Man's Pepper, Soldier's woundwort, Nose Bleed, Yarroway, Carpenter's weed, Millefoil, Stauchgrass, Thousand-leaf, Sanguinary, Bloodwort, Noble yarrow, Knight's Milfoil, Herbe Militaris, Thousand Weed, Stauchweed, Devil's Nettle, Devil's Plaything, Bad Man's Plaything, Angel flower

Family: Asteraceae

Parts Used: herb, root, essential oil, flower essence

Taste & Energetics: a bit bitter, astringent, sweet, neutral with some cooling potential and a dry property

Actions: Diaphoretic, astringent, hemostatic, stimulant.



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History & Folklore (continued): liver because it aids elimination via the gallbladder. Enemas and ointments of yarrow have been used for piles and hemorrhage of the bowel. Some North American Indigenous people used the dried leaves for internal and external bleeding. It is excellent for the blood, may this be cuts or wounds. The deep cut leaflet on the leaves is said to be a doctrine of signature. By association, that deep leaf cut indicates it to be used for deep wound cuts. Stagnant blood is often treated with yarrow. The history of Achillea with Chiron leads us to understand how it can be used for the wounded warrior, but it is just as effective to treat wounded healers, who have taken on the issues of their patients.

The Leech Book of Bald recommends yarrow-based ointments for the small pox, burns and infected and inflamed wounds. Only Plantain (*Plantago major* L.) appears in more Anglo-Saxon wound remedies. The combination of styptic, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties makes yarrow an outstanding treatment for corrupted wounds and bleeding piles. Yarrow can be found in Gerard's Herbal (1597) and that of Lewis (1769), Hooper (1826) and Griffith (1847), as well as amongst the writings of the Eclectics. Cook states: "Its influence upon the uterus and renal apparatus is well marked, making it very useful in cases of degenerate leucorrhoea, gleet, and incontinence of urine. For all the above purposes, it is best in cold infusion; but a warm infusion acts positively in profuse menstruation accompanied by relaxation, and may be found serviceable in flooding, as it has indeed proved valuable in both spitting and vomiting of blood.

In several countries, especially Scandinavian ones, yarrow was made into a strong beer. Well over thirty indigenous North American groups are known to have used yarrow for medicinal purposes. Yarrow's effectiveness as a diaphoretic, febrifuge and anti-rheumatic is clearly represented in the ethnobotanical literature. Native Americans also used the dried leaves of yarrow with plantain to stop internal bleeding, especially in the lungs. The juice of yarrow was obtained by distillation and used to stop hair loss. It also was used to treat leucorrhoea. The Ojibwa used the florets as incense in ceremonies and also burned it to allay fevers. Yarrow was often used, by the Blackfeet, as a tea, drunk to hasten delivery and to expel the afterbirth.

Yarrow was listed officially in the U.S.P. from 1863 to 1882. Sprigs of this herb were used in ancient times to help prevent clumsiness. It was said that many workmen, like carpenters, put a sprig of yarrow with their tool kit every spring and fall, so they wouldn't



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History & Folklore (continued): cut themselves on the job. Yarrow stalks are used as divining sticks in China for the I Ching. Yarrow is an excellent plant for growing in lawns, meadows, orchards etc., as it is tolerant of repeated close cutting and of being walked on. It works to improve soil fertility. A very good companion plant, it improves the health of plants growing nearby and enhances their essential oil content thus making them more resistant to insect predation. Yarrow is not just good to stimulate digestion in the stomach; biodynamic farmers and gardeners often use yarrow tea to help 'digest' the compost. A good bee plant, it is an important nectar source for many insects.

Medicinal Uses: Yarrow is considered both the "master of the blood" and "master of fever" by many prominent herbalists. It is well known for its diaphoretic effect. This herb runs the spectrum from clotting, unclotting, neurovascular control, flavonoids – it regulates the flow of blood to and from the surface. This action of in and out of the capillaries and venules (controlling vasodilation and constriction), works on all manners of wounds, bruises, hemorrhages and clotting. These same mechanisms help its diaphoretic effect by moving blood to the surface to release or preserve heat and regulate fluids. Yarrow can be used on almost any kind of acute inflammation with congested blood, but it is specific for hemorrhages with bright, red bleed and is contraindicated in passive, dark, coagulated blood.

A hot infusion (tea) of the dried herb or flowers helps to promote sweating by dilating the capillaries at the skin's surface. The continued use of a warm infusion arouses capillary action on the skin, securing slow perspiration, and elevating the temperature, opening and softening the skin. This helps cool the body and removes toxins. This also contributes to the circulatory action of lowering blood pressure.

Yarrow is indicated when a person shows an elongated, pointed, reddish tongue (classic indication of heat), but with a blue undertone or middle, indicating venous stagnation. The tongue often has a dry centre (indicating that heat is driving fluid off), with a crack down the midline. In severe cases the crack might be open enough to see deeper tissue, often with crisscrossing (feathered or chained), this indicates a deeper heat. This is usually accompanied with a rapid, full, nonresistant pulse. This means that 'the heat is having its way with the tissue'. Sometimes yarrow is indicated by a pale dry tongue indicating digestive issues.



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Medicinal Uses: There are many healing traditions that consider stagnant blood to be the cause of tumors. This makes yarrow an excellent remedy to aid in preventing and sometimes even curing tumor systems. The tea made into a wash or fomentation has been used by some to treat skin cancer.

Achillea exerts a positive influence directly on the uterus and its circulation, rather than indirectly via the endocrine system. It is recommended in many women's materia medica. Holmes classes Yarrow as a ". . . universal regulator of female reproductive functions from pre-puberty to post menopause".

Yarrow has such a strong indication for blood and bleeding that it is very functional as a women's herb. It is particularly used for stagnant blood, as in amenorrhea when the blood builds up in the uterus. This makes it an excellent remedy for uterine fibroids as well. The tea drunk, used as a douche, and employed in a sitz bath is considered the best way to use yarrow for fibroids. Maria Trebens suggests every woman drink yarrow tea once in a while during her reproductive years, as preventative, just to clear out any stagnant blood. Essence of anise disguises its bitterness well.

Yarrow is also useful for pelvic congestion, reducing excessive flow and pain due to engorged pelvic veins. It is a uterine stimulant and antispasmodic, relieving painful and delayed menstruation. It may be used internally and as a douche for leucorrhoea and for cervical erosion. A manuscript of 1444, preserved in the library of the Medical Society of London gives this recipe for 'Ach of the womb', "Take yarrow that is nosebleed and stamp and temp it with good stale ale and give the sick to drink 3 Spoonfull."

Used as a digestive, its bitter taste will stimulate the gastrointestinal hormone gastrin thus increasing appetite, promoting bile and enhancing pancreatic function. Some herbalists use this plant for diverticulitis and colitis, especially when there is a crack down the center of the tongue, which opens up, with little lines crossing back and forth, around the center point. Usually the tongue is red, indicating heat in the blood.

An infusion of the roots can be used for rheumatism.

Both the tea and the oil of the root are said to stimulate hair growth if applied topically.



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Medicinal Uses: The tea, used both internally and topically, has been used by many to counteract the side effects of radiation therapy and of the cancer drug Tamoxifen. Some patients have felt the good effects of yarrow used as tincture or the tea for this purpose.

Used externally, its astringent properties will aid in the healing of wounds, and it has been used to treat hemorrhoids and varicose veins.

Yarrow is particularly good used for blisters or bruises whether or not there is bleeding. It is often used for bruises instead of arnica, for yarrow can be used as a fresh herb poultice.

It is used by many cultures for skin eruption caused by a fever as an alterative for clearing poisons from blood. Maurice Messegue recommended yarrow for acne and herpes, especially if liver issues were also indicated.

Flower Essence: The positive qualities are inner radiance and strength of aura, compassionate awareness, inclusive sensitivity and beneficent healing forces. Patterns of imbalance: extreme vulnerability to others and to the environment, easily depleted, overly absorbent of negative influences and psychic toxicity. In the past those who were on a spiritual path cloistered themselves away in retreat monasteries. Today many people who are on spiritual paths still remain in the daily roles of modern society. However the need for protection from the outside world remains. Yarrow will help this process. It "heals leaking aura" for sensitive people. A yarrow flower essence formula is considered by many to protect from radiation either for cancer treatments, or for nuclear accidents. Pink Yarrow has the positive qualities of loving awareness of others from self-contained consciousness and appropriate emotional boundaries. The pattern of imbalance is influenced by negative forces, overly absorbent auric field, lack of emotional clarity and dysfunctional merging with others. Some people seem to be "allergic" to emotional confusion. Pink Yarrow flower essence will help build boundaries for this.

Homeopathic: Listed under Millefolium, yarrow is suggested for many types of hemorrhages, bright red blood, incarcerated hernia, small-pox, operations for stones, vertigo when moving slow. Sensation as if they have forgotten something. Used tincture to 12x.



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Indications: According to Ellingwood the following " . . .indications will guide in the selection of this remedy: Hot, dry burning skin, at the beginning of acute asthenic fevers, with suppressed secretion; deficient renal action, with vesical renal or urethral irritation; acute or chronic Bright's disease in its incipient stage. Leucorrhea, with relaxed vaginal walls. Menorrhagia and amenorrhea; hemorrhoids, with bloody discharge, atonic gastric and intestinal dyspepsia; passive hemorrhages.

Contraindications: In large doses yarrow is a uterine stimulant and therefore both tea and tincture should be avoided during pregnancy. It can be used during pregnancy as a flower essence or diluted in a homeopathic way 1 - 12 x. The essential oil is contraindicated in pregnancy.

Toxicity: There is no indication of toxicity for internal use in reference reviews. Some people have a skin sensitivity especially with over consumption. Photosensitivity has also been noticed.

Preparations & Dosage: Steam distillation of the flowers results in a beautiful dark blue essential oil, similar to chamomile, which has an anti-inflammatory action. The volatile oil content of the leaf is quite variable, (250- 41,000 ppm) easily verified by tasting a selection of leaves from different environments; that of the flowers is more consistent (700-5,000 ppm).

Dosage:

- Powder 30 - 60 grains
- Infusion 6 oz
- Tincture 5 - 20 drops
- Fluid extract 1/2 - 1 tsp.
- Oil 2 - 20 drops