



VIRTUAL  
**HERB**  
Walk

*A Visual Guide to  
Wild Medicinal  
Herbs*



**WILD ROSE**  
College of Herbal Medicine



Wild Rose College of Herbal Medicine  
 Virtual Herb Walk  
 by **Terry Willard** and **Yarrow Willard**

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT YOU WILL GET OUT OF THIS BOOK

Out of all the areas in the world, North America has some of the most bountiful greenery around. This is especially true for those living in Canada (despite how cold it is!). In order to fully appreciate and utilize our stunning surroundings, we've put together an eBook of over forty of the most common medicinal herbs to be found in both urban areas and wild spaces around North America. This E-Book will give you both knowledge and appreciation for our environment. As well, it can offer you insight into the diverse and fascinating world of herbalism. Whether you're interested in what nature can offer, or you're looking for a practical guide to get you started on your herbalist journey, this is the book for you!

## INTRO TO PLANTS / WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE

Though there are far more than forty, these medicinal herbs have had a long history in North America. Originally utilized by Indigenous peoples, they hold many different uses from food to household items or even medicine. Although modern science has made many improvements, the medicinal properties of these herbs remain potent and can still be utilized. For avid nature-goers or those looking for a more natural lifestyle and everyone in between, this information is highly beneficial.

## CAUTIONS ON PROPER ID

As with anything else, there are associated cautions with herb-picking and consuming. To the best of our ability, we've included a section for every herb that requires any type of special treatment or warning. As always, please exercise caution. If you are unsure that you have the right herb, consult an expert before harvesting.

Many herbs have look-alikes and even the most experienced wild harvesters can make mistakes. The use of proper botany and a local field guide book is recommended when heading out to harvest plants as medicine.

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# PLANT IDENTIFICATION

The knowledge of basic plant identification is a valuable tool for a person wanting to use plants in the 'wilds'. A wild-crafter is a person that harvests botanical medicine in the 'wild'. We strongly advise you to not eat a plant or use it for medicine until you are sure of its identification. Just because one part of the plant is edible, doesn't mean all other parts are also. Some parts can be quite useful, while other plant parts might be poisonous.

We feel it is important that a Herbalist at least knows the basis of botany, which is grounded in plant identification and classification. (Botany for Herbalist)

## THE BASICS (PRINCIPAL PARTS OF A PLANT)

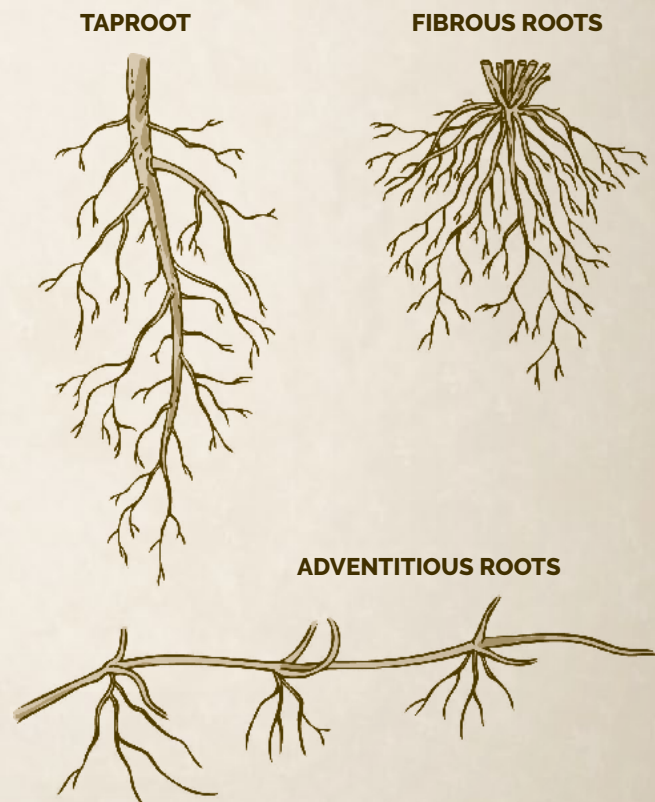
The basic parts of all plants are the roots, stem, leaves, flower and fruit. When a person is not trained in field botany, they often walk along in the woods and see one big sea of green with the odd splash of color saying "look at me". These colorful flowers are often the ones we identify first. Looking the flowers up in a color key, we can find the flowers that match. Even though this can be expedient and helpful, it often shows us the plant when it is past its herbal prime, or maybe even before it is ready to harvest. Once you have identified a plant, get used to what its leaves look like. For practical purposes, the most important parts to get to know are the leaves. To formally identify a plant, you often need the flower and maybe the fruit to 'key' out the plant in a botanical guide. In field botany for herbalists, you have to be able to recognize a plant at almost any stage of growth. Once you get intimate with a particular plant, this is quite easy.

This is the start of the journey to really get to know the plant, and from there you can explore harvesting the plant for edible or medicinal use. Many people use less than 50 plants, but know these plants really well. It is not the number of plants that you know herbal trivia about that counts. It is more about how many you are intimate enough with to know how to really use them. This is no different in saying it is not as important of how many 'Facebook Friends' you have; than how well you know your inner circle of friends and acquaintances – enough to rely on them that counts in life. Yes, your health could rely on your plant identification ability.

There is an important rule to remember - plants are like humans, they do not always look alike. In nature, you will have great variation in a species of a plant from one region to another and even within a specific habitat. It is also useful to get to know the type of area that a specific plant prefers. Knowing the ecology of a plant's environment will help you find it again in the future.

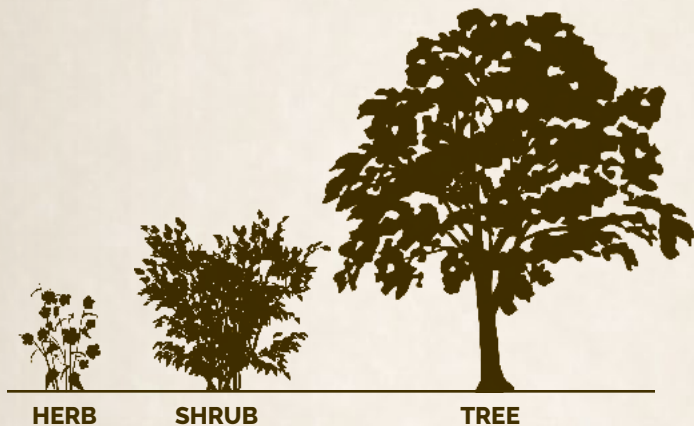
## TYPES OF ROOTS

The primary root is the first one, which then produces secondary roots (root hairs). These can form two basic root structures, the fibrous roots and tap roots. All plants that are monocots (grasses, bamboo and the like) have fibrous roots. Some dicots have fibrous roots. Only dicots have taproots. Adventitious roots grow from a "non-root" place as seen in the diagram. We also find aerial roots and root parasites.



# THE VASCULAR SYSTEM

The stem helps support other parts of the plant while conducting water and nutrients between its parts. The shape and strength of the stem often helps determine how the plant can compete in the local environment. Can it get the leaves above the other plants? Will it be easy for animals to get the berries and therefore distribute its offspring? Will it give enough support in the rain and wind? All of these things help determine the shape of the stem.

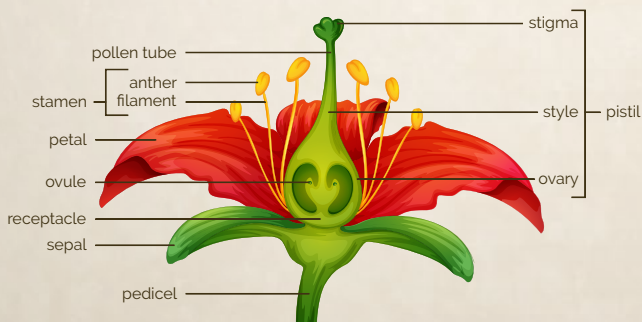


The classification of plants into herbs, shrubs and trees can be very useful, but sometimes a bit arbitrary. A plant that might be a shrub in the North Country can easily be a tree in the South. From a botanist's point of view, an herb is defined as a herbaceous plant.

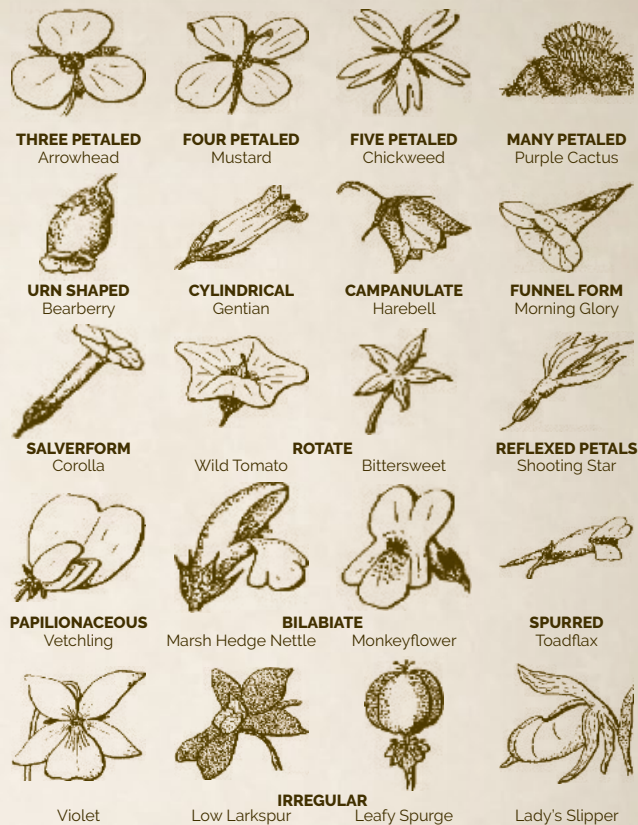
The herbaceous aerial portion is relatively short-lived, having a comparatively soft tissue. In temperate climates the aerial parts usually live for only one growing season.

# FLOWERS

The sexiest part of the plant is, of course, the flower. It is often the most attractive part of the plant and where the mechanism of reproduction goes on. Let's read about the parts of the flower.



# FLOWER TYPES



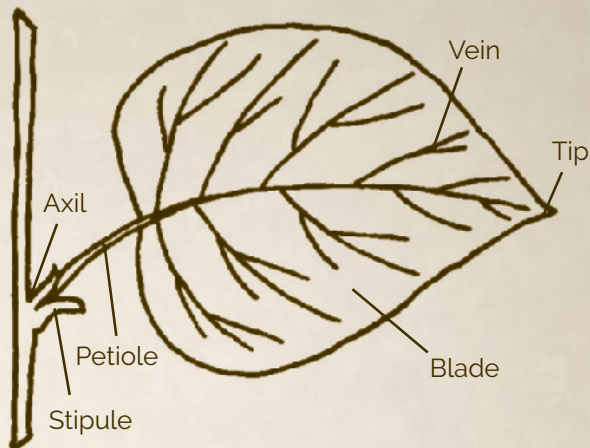
# SEED TYPES











































# LEAVES

The leaves are where the “factory workers” are. This is where the nutrients and water combine with the energy from the sun to drive the engines.

This process is extremely important as this is the energy capturing system of our planet. All biological processes depend ultimately on the strength of plants to capture the sun’s energy. The leaves are where plants manufacture nutrients for other species to live on, either as a primary or secondary consumer.



# LEAF TYPES

 Acicular needle shaped	 Digitate with finger-like lobes	 Obovate heart-shaped, stem at point	 Peltate stem attached centrally	 Spatulate spoon-shaped
 Acuminate tapering to a long point	 Elliptic oval-shaped, small or no point	 Obovate egg-shaped, narrow at base	 Perfoliate stem seeming to pierce leaf	 Spear-shaped pointed, barbed base
 Alternate leaflets arranged alternately	 Falcate hooked or sickle shaped	 Obtuse bluntly tipped	 Odd Pinnate leaflets in rows, one at tip	 Subulate tapering point, awl-shaped
 Aristate with a spine-like tip	 Flabellate fan shaped	 Opposite leaflets in adjacent pairs	 Even Pinnate leaflets in rows, two at tip	 Trifoliate/Ternate leaflets in threes
 Bipinnate leaflets also pinnate	 Hastate triangular with basal lobes	 Orbicular circular	 Pinnatisect deep, opposite lobing	 Tripinnate leaflets also bipinnate
 Cordate heart-shaped, stem in cleft	 Lanceolate pointed at both ends	 Ovate egg-shaped, wide at base	 Reniform kidney-shaped	 Truncate squared-off apex
 Cuneate wedge shaped, acute base	 Linear parallel margins, elongate	 Palmate resembles a hand	 Rhomboid diamond-shaped	 Unifoliate having a single leaf
 Deltoid triangular	 Lobed deeply indented margins	 Pedate palmate, divided lateral lobes	 Rosette leaflets in tight circular rings	 Whorled rings of three or more leaflets

# ETHICS AND BASIC TECHNIQUES AROUND HARVESTING DRYING AND PROCESSING

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## PARTS OF THE PLANT TO HARVEST

**ROOTS** are traditionally harvested in late Fall, before the foliage has died off completely (so you can still identify it), or after the snow has melted in early Spring and the new shoots can be identified.

**AERIAL PORTIONS** are best harvested before flower, in mid to late Spring.

**FLOWERS** are picked when fresh and young, and even before fully expanding, but generally not the green buds.

**FRUITS** are picked when ripe, in good color and firm, which for most plants is late summer to early winter

**BARK** is traditionally harvested in Fall as the leaves turn, and in the Spring as the leaf buds begin to open. We prefer the fall harvest as it feels as though it is better for the tree as it prepares to go dormant.

**PITCH AND PLANT SECRETIONS** are best harvested in the late winter or early spring. Often these are dried on the outside of the bark and can be scraped off with a knife. Remember that pitches are the dried blood of the tree and are secreted from a wound, so if you harvest them, remember to give thanks to the tree and possibly give it a hug as likely it could use one!

## WILD HARVESTING HERBS

When wild crafting, check that you have all the right things you will need before you go out. Leather work gloves, a good pocket knife, pruning shears, pruning saw, hand spade, and or scissors depending on what you are harvesting. Containers to store harvested plant material in, such as baskets or nylon woven bags. Plastic containers or paper bags for flowers and delicacies, to avoid sweating the plant you can poke small holes in the lid. As well, a sturdy backpack with extra food, clothes, and first aid.

Make sure the places you are harvesting in are both environmentally clean and that you are not illegally trespassing, or in protected park lands. Giving respect or offerings to the plants you are harvesting will always increase their medicine. It is best to take good care of a patch, picking only what you need and never as much as to compromise the area next year. Be aware of your actions and practice care to the environment around you... basically don't be a jerk!



## DRYING METHODS

### ABOVE GROUND FOLIAGE THAT FORMS DISTINCT STEMS:

Stems should be cut just below the lowest green leaves and bundled with rubber bands, the bundled stems no thicker than an inch in diameter. If the plants are excessively dirty they can be rinsed with cool water, gently shaken dry and bundled. The bundle is hung upside down from a line in a cool dry location until brittle. When dry the herb can be rubbed over screens, broken or cut into coarse pieces and stored in a glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. Label the jar with the plant name, botanical name, place collected, and date harvested. Stacking stainless steel screens are also useful for foliage and flowers, but more expensive and better for larger operations.

### DELICATE AND PERISHABLE HERBS, FLOWERS, SMALL

**ROOTS, OR FRUITS:** The herbs are collected and spread loosely over a length of cheesecloth (at least 24 inches wide) and the corners tacked to the ceiling or under shelving in a well ventilated area. The edges can be tacked every 2 ft. or so, with a sag in the middle of no more than 8-10 inches. For smaller amounts the cheesecloth can be spread over an open box.

**FOR ROOTS:** Roots are best spray cleaned with cool water when fresh and patted dry with a dry cloth. If excessively dirty, they can be scrubbed clean with a nylon scrub brush. Bigger roots should be chopped into 1/4 inch thick segments and allowed to dry on cheesecloth or on screens.

**FOR BARK:** The bark should be cut into strips no wider than 1 inch and allowed to dry over some paper or screens.



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This Course takes an ecological approach to the amazing world of plant identification, celebrating the incredible communication and intelligence of the natural world.



Learn the history of cannabis medicine, current scientific research and its applications in today's healthcare. For healthcare providers and lay folk alike.



# ARNICA

**NAME** - *Arnica* spp.: *Arnica*= from Greek *arnakis* (lambskin) from the texture of the leaves; *montana* = “of the mountains”;

**ID** - Perennial herbs, arnica grow from a rootstock 2 – 5 cm long. They have erect stems and stand 15 – 60 cm tall. The leaves are opposite, simple, entire or toothed. The composite flower head is yellow and flowers from July – August.

**DISTRIBUTION** - It can be found in mountainous regions throughout the area. There are many species, all of which have similar properties; *Arnica montana* is usually considered the official herb.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- As a tincture, it is extremely effective in taking the pain out of sprains, bruises and breaks
- For similar results, it can also be used as an external liniment

**BENEFITS** - Arnica is well known as a stimulant and nervine to the body.

**TIP** - *Needs to be tinctured within a few hours of harvesting.*

**CAUTIONS** - As it can cause blistering of the intestinal tract and is toxic in the bloodstream, the herb should not be used internally (with the exception of homeopathic preparations) or on open wounds, except under special conditions.



# BARBERRY

**NAME** - *Berberis repens*: *Berberis* = ber-be-ris, L. for Barbary (from an Arabic name for North Africa); *repens* = L. for “creeping”;

**ID** - This creeping, evergreen shrub is usually less than 30 cm tall with rootlets along its length. The leaves are pinnate compound, holly-like, with spiny marginal teeth. The flowers are small, yellow and borne in clusters. The black or blue-black berries are 1/3 inch in diameter.

**DISTRIBUTION** - These plants like to grow in the shade, mostly on hillsides and slopes from the Pacific to the Rocky Mountain Foothills.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- The berries are quite juicy with a pleasant acid taste and make good pies and jellies
- Barberry is a very valuable herb to the First Nations people. It is well known for its ability to correct liver secretions.
- A tonic made from this herb is suitable for delicate or weaker people, and can aid in the progress of anemia / general malnutrition to health

**BENEFITS** - The herb has a variety of uses, from lowering blood pressure, treating kidney troubles or working as an antiseptic. Whether it's the berries, leaves or bark, there are many ailments barberry can help treat.

**TIP** - *It is also very effective as horse medicine!*



# BEARBERRY

**NAME** - *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*: *Arctostaphylos* = ark-to-sta-fil-os, from Gr. *arctos* (a bear) and *staphyles* (a bunch of grapes or “berries”); *uva-ursi* = oo-va-ur-see, L. for “berries-Bear’s”;

**ID** - Bearberry is a trailing evergreen shrub often forming mats 50 – 100 cm wide. The flowers are pale pink to white, urn-shaped in terminal racemes. The leaves are oval, leathery and evergreen. The branches are rusty red, and tend to lose their bark in shreds.

**DISTRIBUTION** - It is usually found in well-drained habitat, such as open woodland, bench land and gravel terraces.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Although the berries are mealy and near-tasteless when raw, they’re quite good cooked and taste a bit bitter. They can be made into cider as well.
- The leaves are powerfully astringent and have tannin levels so high they’ve been used to tan hides! This can be used to your advantage during hikes - to toughen up the feet, soak them in a strong decoction for one hour the night before hiking to avoid blisters.

**BENEFITS** - The herb is listed as diurectic, astringent, soothing and nephritic, and therefore has a myriad of uses. It is especially useful in cases pertaining to gravel or ulceration of the kidneys or bladder.

**CAUTIONS** - If pregnant, do not consume large quantities as bearberry is a mild vasoconstrictor to the endometrium of the uterus.



**TIP** - *Due to their bitter taste, some people chew the berries or leaves to prevent thirst, and the bitterness stimulates saliva.*



# BURDOCK

**NAME** - *Arctium minus* & spp.

*Arctium* = L. for “bear”; *minus* = L. for “smaller”;

**ID** - These large biennial herbs are 1 – 2.5 m tall and have broad alternate leaves with several flower heads. The leaves are up to 50cm long, ovate to oblong and sometimes cordate. The flowers are tubular, pink or purplish. The seeds are borne in prickly burrs.

**DISTRIBUTION** - The plant was introduced from Europe and now grows in wastelands throughout North America.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- The young shoots can be cooked like a pot herb, though some consider them too strong. Switching out the water while boiling may help.
- Inside the stems, there’s an inner pith-like material that can be eaten raw
- The roots can be eaten boiled or roasted and they are a good coffee substitute

**BENEFITS** - All parts of burdock have important medicinal uses. As a tea, its roots can cleanse out the liver by stimulating bile flow and has a mild laxative effect. A tea or tincture can also help with stomach complaints, a prolapsed uterus, gout, or to wash sores with. Poultice made from the leaves can soothe skin irritations or treat poison ivy and poison oak.

**CAUTIONS** - Pregnant women should not consume its seeds as it can cause spotting and even the rare case of miscarriage.



# CALENDULA

**NAME** - *Calendula officinalis*.

**ID** - Native to Mediterranean countries, it now grows in North America and Asia as well. It prefers light to sandy, well drained soils.

**DISTRIBUTION** - A member of the Asteraceae family, it grows 30-60cm high with a branching stem pattern, with paddle-shaped lower leaves and small, pointed upper leaves. It blooms bright yellow or orange flowers.

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Calendula is best used as an external topical ointment where it speeds up healing processes and prevents infections
- The antifungal properties make it an excellent remedy to athlete's foot
- The plant's high estrogenic effects are useful to treating symptoms of menopause, menstruation and breast tenderness

**BENEFITS** - The plant has positive effects on the immune system and is a good detoxifying agent for those suffering from liver or digestive issues. Similarly, it also promotes sweating, which helps relieve the body of toxins. It is also used to treat skin conditions such as burns, eczema and acne.

**CAUTIONS** - Calendula may interact with sedative and antihypertensive drugs. For those with sensitive skin, it may cause rashes. As it affects the menstrual cycle, it should not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding. For those trying to conceive, it should not be used either. Children should only receive topical treatments.



# CATTAIL

**NAME** - *Typha latifolia*: *Typha* = from Gr. “of the bog”; *latifolia* = “broad-leaved”;

**ID** - Tall marsh herbs, cattails can grow up to 3m tall. They have a coarse creeping rootstock with small flowers, on conspicuous mace-like flower-spikes. The leaves are long, linear, upright, flat and sheathed. The seeds are borne in minute achenes on slender stalks and scatter in fluffy masses in late summer.

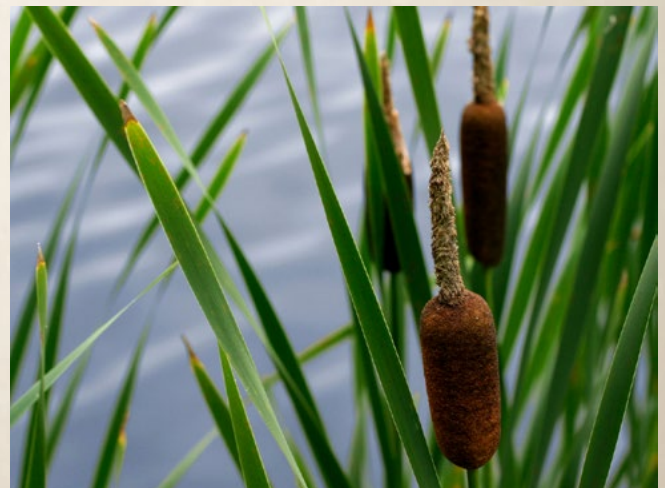
**DISTRIBUTION** - Common in marshes and shallow water throughout the area.

**PREPARATION / USES** - There are so many possible uses for cattail that it has been called the “Supermarket of the Swamp”. Below are just a few possible ones:

- Young shoots, once pulled loose from the rootstock, can be peeled. Their tender cores can be used in salads or cooked. For older shoots, it’s best to boil them!
- Similarly, young flower stalks are popular. They can be peeled and after being boiled for 20 minutes, they taste like corn on the cob.
- Cattail roots are also edible and taste best in spring, when they are new, and should be peeled as well.

**BENEFITS** - Due to its widespread nature, the plant is used commonly by Indigenous peoples of Canada for many medicinal purposes as well. The roots can be pounded into a jelly-like poultice to be used on wounds. The slightly astringent flowerheads can also be used eaten to stop diarrhea.

**TIP** - *Cattail pollen can even be used as flour.*



# CHICKWEED

**NAME** - *Stellaria spp.* Stellaria L. from star, the appearance of stitchwort flowers

**ID** - Chickweeds are slender herbs 5-30 cm tall and are found growing in tufts or mats. The flowers are small with blue-green leaves that are linear and stiff with lower leaves that turn brown with maturity. The seeds are borne in shiny black capsules.

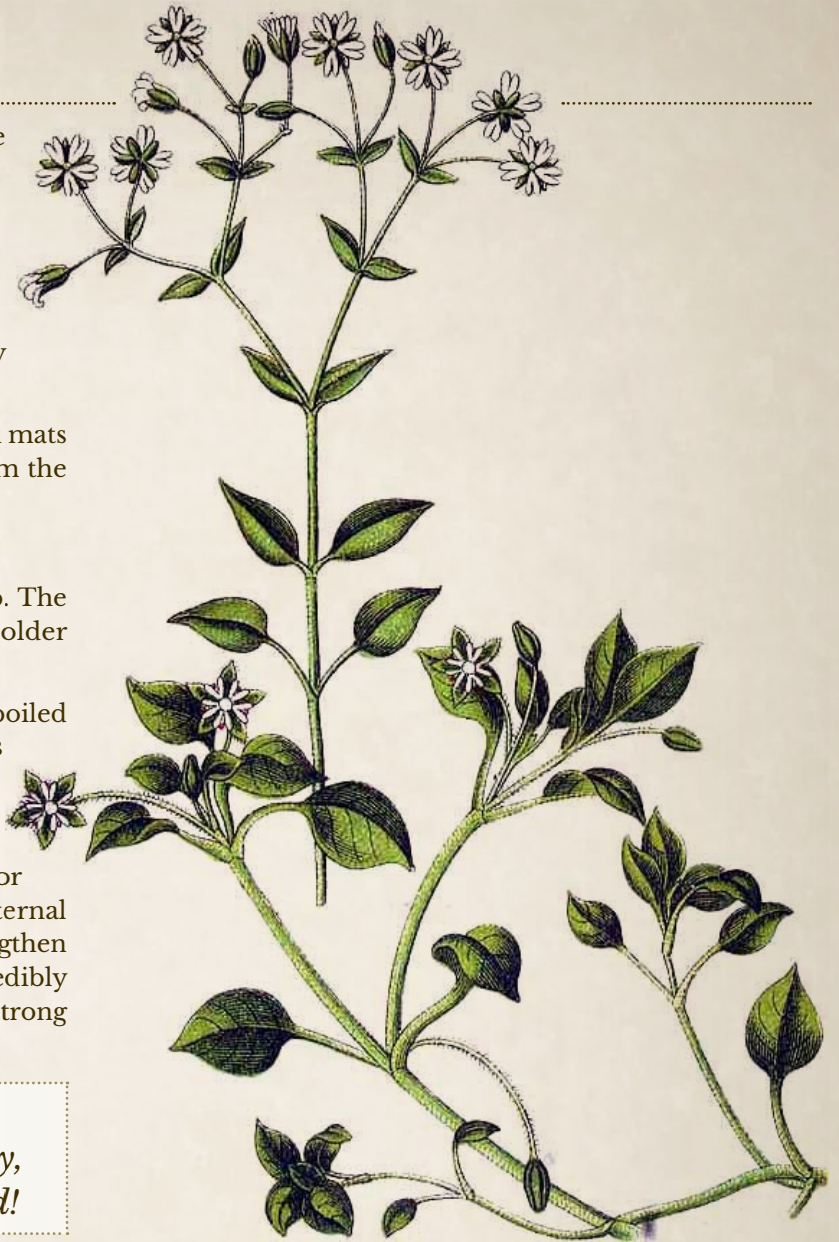
**DISTRIBUTION** - It is quite common and found in mats along road sides, paths and open meadows from the foothills to the alpine meadows.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- Chickweed is edible as a delicious salad herb. The young shoots are fresh and best, although older shoots can be blanched.
- As a pot herb, it can be eaten like spinach, boiled in a small amount of water for 20-30 minutes
- Its roots can be used medicinally as a tonic, laxative and diuretic

**BENEFITS** - It is an excellent healing herb for pulmonary issues, any form of internal or external inflammation of membrane and skin, or to strengthen the stomach and bowels. In particular, it is incredibly effective in soothing itchy skin in the form of a strong tea wash. It can be used to treat hives as well.

**TIP** - *As the name suggests, many animals such as chicken, other poultry, pigs and rabbits like to eat chickweed!*



# COMFREY

**NAME** - *Symphytum officinale*.

**ID** - Comfrey grows from a thick hairy stem, 2 to 5 feet tall. Its flowers grow in dense clusters, ranging from dull purple, blue or white. The root is fleshy, white and filled with juice on the inside and black outside.

**DISTRIBUTION** - It is Indigenous to Europe and temperate parts of Asia and grows in moist soils.

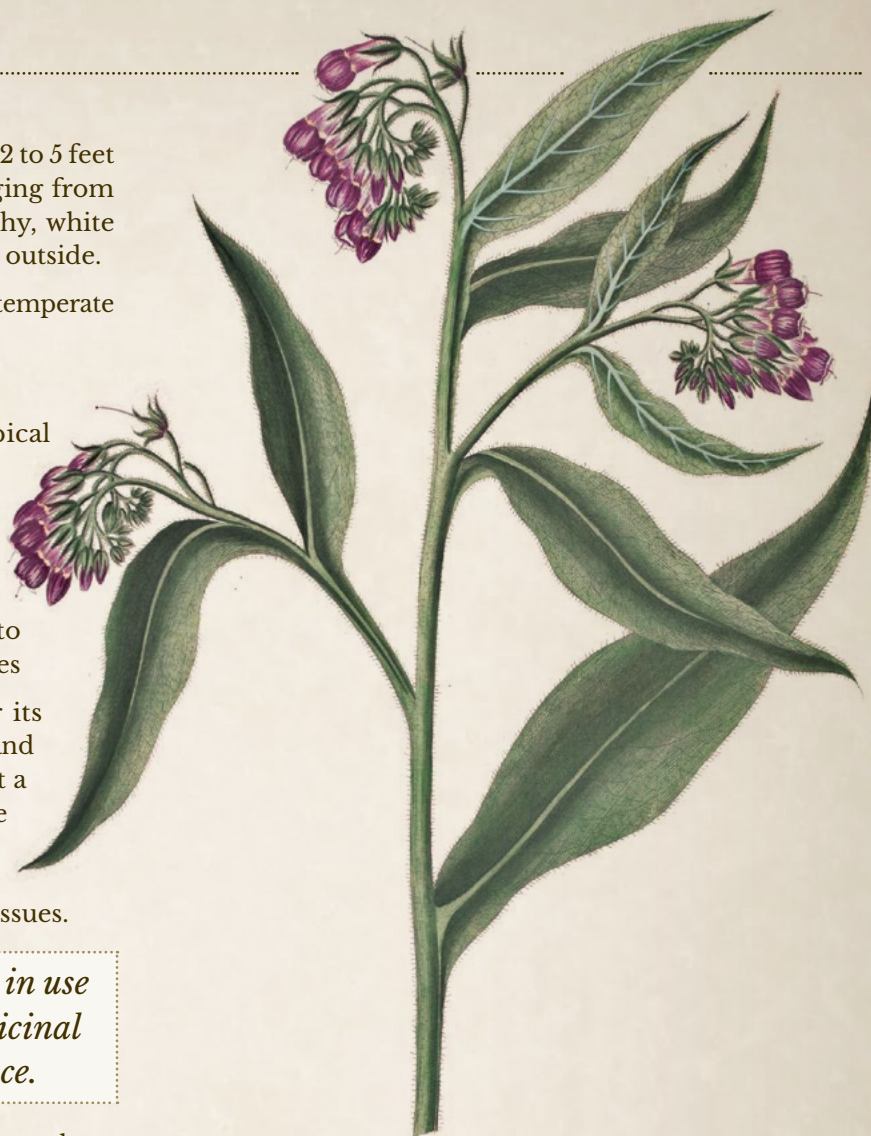
**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Comfrey is found in ointments for topical application
- A mouthwash made from the herb will heal sore throats and helps treat gum disease or hoarseness
- Roots and leaves can be easily crushed to make poultices, and help heal skin injuries

**BENEFITS** - The herb is most famous for its allantoin, which helps new skin cells grow and regenerates connective tissue. This makes it a popular skincare ingredient to heal and soothe skin. It also has high amounts of protein, antioxidants and vitamin B12, which can help treat many ailments such as digestive issues.

**TIP** - *Some think the herb has been in use from 400 BC, not only for its medicinal properties, but also as sustenance.*

**CAUTIONS** - Comfrey is not suggested for internal use without practitioner advice.





# COUCH GRASS

**NAME** - *Elymus repens* (L.) Gould (aka *Agropyron repens*)

**ID** - Couch Grass grows slender leaves out of a long creeping rhizome. The plant bears two rows of flowers with erect spikes

**DISTRIBUTION** - It is found in open grasslands in the Americas, Northern Asia, Australia and Europe

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Normally ingested as a tea. Sometimes, it is in capsule or tincture form as well.
- The tea is regarded as an excellent detoxifier for the liver and boosts the body's natural immunity. It is also a good 'drainer' for the kidneys.

**BENEFITS** - Though it has many medicinal properties, it is best known for its mucilage, which is found in the rhizome. This will coat the throat, therein helping clear congestion and also phlegm. The herb also has high diuretic and antibiotic qualities, and the tea is also used to treat urinary infections.

**TIP** - Couch grass is also known as dog grass and gets its name from dogs that dig it up to eat it when they're ill



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# COW PARSNIP

**NAME** - *Heracleum lanatum*: *Heracleum* = hay-ra-klee-um, L. Hercules healer (a name used by Theophrastus); *lanatum* = L. "woolly"

**ID** - 1-2 m high with leaves 30cm broad, the herb is palmately-veined. The flowers are small and sweetly scented in large compound umbels with stout and hollow stems. The fruit is flat and winged at the edges.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Cow parsnip is the most common member of the carrot family in the area. It is found growing in moist hollows along intermittent streams, among willow and other thickets throughout the region.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- The roots taste like rutabagas when cooked and be a substitute as such.
- Young cow parsnip leaves can be eaten in salad or cooked. Given their size, they may even be used as wraps for salad rolls!
- Similarly, the stems, once peeled and cooked (also able to be consumed raw) can be eaten.

**BENEFITS** - Cow parsnip has many medicinal properties that the Indigenous peoples (of what is now Canada) utilized - the roots and seeds are considered antispasmodic, carminative and expectorant. A tea from the dried roots can be used for gassiness. A tincture from the seed can also be used for nausea. Both roots and seed have been used for calming down a nervous spastic colon. The seeds are excellent for toothaches.

**TIP** - *Cow parsnip, with its large leaves, is known as "nature's toilet paper!" A small percentage of people have an allergy to it, so be sure to test it out beforehand.*

**CAUTIONS** - Great care should be taken in selecting this plant as it looks like water hemlock which is deadly poisonous. This plant also has an 'evil' cousin (Giant Hogweed; *Heracleum mantegazzianum*) that has been introduced into gardens from southwest Asia. It is starting to naturalize especially in Eastern North America, being semi common in southern and central Ontario. The clear watery sap of giant hogweed contains toxins that can cause severe dermatitis (inflammation of the skin). You can get severe burns if you get the sap on your skin and the skin is then exposed to sunlight. Symptoms occur within 48 hours and consist of painful



blisters. Purplish scars may form that last for many years. Eye contact with the sap has been reported (in the media and by various web sites) to cause temporary or permanent blindness. However, evidence of permanent blindness linked to exposure to giant hogweed cannot be substantiated by any existing research.



# DANDELION

**NAME** - *Taraxacum officinale*, from the Persian, literally meaning 'disturber'

**ID** - A perennial composite with a solitary yellow flower head, dandelion are one of the most common plants. It has hollow stems with a milky liquid (latex) and leaves in rosettes with deep pinnate teeth arising from a fleshy tap root. The seeds are achenes with white pappus. Given how common it is, identification probably isn't necessary.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Lawns everywhere!

## PREPARATION / USES -

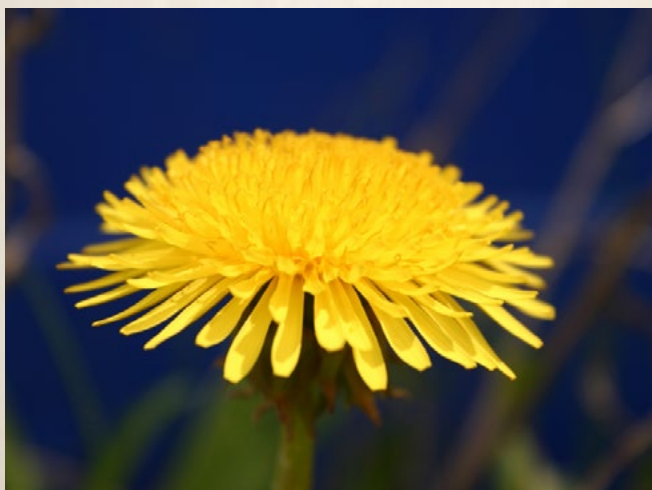
- We'd be remiss not to talk about dandelion wine; native to Eurasia, that was their initial purpose. You can still make your own wine today with the flowers.
- A substitute for greens, such as in salads or cooked vegetables. For this, it's best to get them while they're still young, before flowers grow. Dandelions found in deep, shady areas have naturally blanched leaves (white or yellow) that are most tender.
- Dandelion roots are also delicious. It can be sliced and cooked like carrots, or part of a stew.
- The milky latex is excellent to remove warts. Apply 2 - 4 times a day for 7 -10 days.

**BENEFITS** - The leaves are very high in Vitamin A, C and B complex. They are also widespread and harvesting them would reduce the number of weeds.

**CAUTIONS** - Dandelion are everywhere; for eating, be sure to get them from an unsprayed area.



**TIP** - For older dandelion, changing the water a couple times during boiling will reduce bitterness.



# DOCK AND SORRELS

**NAME** - *Rumex spp.*: *Rumex* = ru-meks, from the Latin name for *Rumex acetosa*;

**ID** - These coarse perennial herbs usually have thick roots. Depending on the species, they range from 10cm to 2m tall with alternate leaves. Often, lower leaves are larger, oblong to broadly lanceolate. The flowers are small and green with a red tinge.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found throughout North America in waste land. They prefer moist and saline areas.

**PREPARATION / USES** -

- The leaves and petioles are quite tart and can be used as a rhubarb substitute
- It can also be used as a spinach substitute in salads as well - as the flavour is quite strong, there's no dressing required.
- Yellow or curly dock is known for its ability to cleanse blood. It can be used for liver problems as well.

**BENEFITS** - Dock leaves have more vitamin C than oranges and more vitamin A than carrots. It's also very high in calcium, iron and potassium. Given its high vitamin content and numerous medicinal uses, it's a very useful herb.

**TIP** - *Many people used the roots to produce a yellow dye.*

**CAUTIONS** - The plant is quite tart. Although some livestock problems have been recorded, there have been no known cases of human toxicity. Boiling the herb with a change of water can alleviate the flavour.



# ECHINACEA

**NAME** - *Echinacea* = e-kee-nah-kee-a, from Gr. *echinos* (hedgehog) referring to the prickly scales

**ID** - From a taproot, the plant is 30-100 cm tall with bristly hairs on the stem and leaves. The leaves are mostly basal and broadly lanceolate, 10 – 50 mm long. The solitary flower head appears from July to October and varies from rose to purple.

**DISTRIBUTION** - This plant grows in dry, open areas and prairies throughout the United States.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- This plant was used medically by Plains First Nations people extensively for its myriad of medicinal uses. Foremost, it is the ‘great antidote’ to snake bites, stings and poisoning.
- To cure headaches, the herb could also be smoked
- The root of the plant is used to treat toothaches and swollen glands through chewing

**BENEFITS** - Echinacea has many medicinal uses. In addition to the uses listed, it is also an excellent blood purifier, herbal prophylactic (helping prevent colds and flus), speeds up tissue repair and more. It is considered the greatest antioxidant as well.

**TIP** - *The root and leaf first taste sweet before causing a tingling sensation in the mouth*



# ELDERBERRY

**NAME** - *Sambucus melanocarpa*: *Sambucus* = sam-bew-kus, from its Latin name coming from Greek *sanbuke* (an instrument) referring to its use as a flute or from Gr. name for the elder tree; *melanocarpa* = L. "black-fruited"

**ID** - This shrub grows 1 – 3 m high and often forms large clumps. It has many small white flowers growing large terminal compound cymes. The leaves are pinnate, usually with 5 – 7 serrated leaflets. Like the name indicates, it bears black fruit.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Black elderberry forms clumps in moist thickets from the foothills into the low alpine regions.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- When mature, the fruit is sweet and juicy and great in pies, jellies and as wine. Some can experience mild nausea if they eat too many of them raw, but cooking them removes this.
- The bark is said to be successful in treating epilepsy when steeped in water and consumed
- A tea made from the flowers can be good for inflammation of the eyes when taken internally

**BENEFITS** - In addition to the uses listed above, many parts of the plant are listed as emetic, hydragogue and cathartic. The flowers are diaphoretic, diuretic, alterative, emollient, antiseptic and gently stimulant as well. As a result, elderberry is said to be cosmetically enhancing and useful on skin issues such as spots or irritation. Similarly, it can be made into a salve to soothe skin.

**CAUTIONS** - *Sambucus pubens* (red elderberry) - distinguished by its red/yellowish berries- is said to be poisonous. Kingsbury says that the berries cause



little more than nausea in humans, (especially if cooked with the seeds removed) but the root and stem can be dangerous. Children should be discouraged from using the stems.

*First Nations people often made flutes out of the branches by cutting them in the spring and letting them dry.*



# ELECAMPANE

**NAME** - *Inula helenium*.

**ID** - Elecampane grows from 3 - 6 feet with a hairy lower stem that grows to be sparsely branched and downy at the top. The stem grows from a basal rosette of ovate, large and pointed leaves, resembling that of mullein. Its flowers are bright yellow and roughly 4 inches in diameter, resembling small sunflowers.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in eastern and central regions of North America, it grows wild in damp meadows, pastures, old fields and roadsides and prefers a damp, partly shaded environment.

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Best known for its use in treating the respiratory system, Elecampane root has been consumed as cough drops, candy and asthma lozenges.
- For veterinary purposes, the plant has also been used to treat skin ailments in animals
- It has also been used to treat digestive issues and is the main ingredient in a wine specifically meant to comfort the stomach

**BENEFITS** - The herb is very effective against respiratory issues, such as chronic bronchitis or asthma and has long been recognized as such. Traditionally, it was used to treat tuberculosis as it has active antibacterial and antifungal properties. It can also stimulate the nervous system, digestion and adrenal cortex.



**TIP** - Legend says the name 'helenium' came from Helen of Troy, whose tears turned the plant into Elecampane. Ancient Greeks and Romans believed the plant was a cure all.



# FENNEL

**Name** - *Foeniculum vulgare*

**ID** - A perennial herb, it can grow up to 2.5 m with hollow stems and feathery leaves that are fine and up to 40 cm long. The flowers grow in terminal compound umbels of 5-15 cm with 20-50 small, yellow flowers on each umbel. Its fruit are dry seeds from 4-10 mm long with distinct grooves.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Fennel is found all over the world in dry, stony soils near the sea.

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Fresh leaves can be used as a seasoning or garnish for salads and are quite aromatic
- A gargle from its infusion is an excellent remedy for sore throats
- Dried and crushed fennel is a good insect repellent and can be used to rid dogs of fleas

**BENEFITS** - There are many medicinal qualities to fennel. Just to list a few, it is antidepressant, diuretic, anti-microbial and fever-reducing as well. As a result, it can be used for a number of treatments. It is very useful on digestive disorders and can help treat diarrhea. In India, the seeds are chewed after a meal to stimulate digestion.

**CAUTIONS** - Pregnant women should not take fennel in large quantities. Some may find it induces photosensitivity on the skin and should be careful. Do not take it in excess.





# FEVERFEW

**NAME** - *Tanacetum parthenium*

**ID** - Feverfew is a perennial that can grow into bushes of up to 70cm tall. Its leaves are a light, yellow-green and pungent. The flowers it grows are daisy-like and sometimes grown for decoration. They are yellow and white, up to 20mm.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Native to Eurasia, it has spread through cultivation to North America

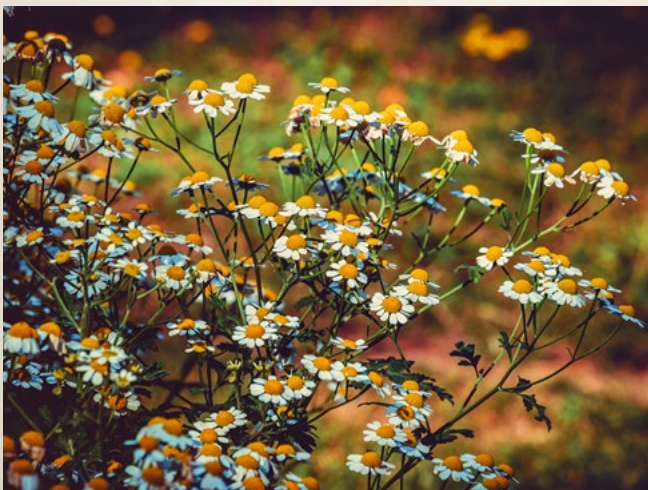
**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Most commonly, it is taken orally to prevent migraines
- In addition to migraines, it can also help against fevers and dizziness
- It is also effective topically to relieve itching and prevent bug bites. On the gums, it can tame toothaches.

**BENEFITS** - Medically, it has the chemical parthenolide which is best known for its ability to fight migraines and related symptoms. More recently, researchers are testing for feverfew's effectiveness on arthritis and cancer as well.

**TIP** - *The use of feverfew dates back to the 1st century, where it was listed as an anti-inflammatory by Dioscorides, a Greek herbalist and physician*

**CAUTIONS** - It should not be consumed if pregnant. It's best to stop intake gradually as immediately stopping can cause rebound syndromes.



# FIREWEED

**NAME** - *Epilobium angustifolium*: *Epilobium* = e-pi-lo-bee-um, from Greek *epi* (upon) and *lobos* (a pod), the name indicates the positioning of the corolla on top of the ovary; *angustifolium* = L. “narrow-leaved”;

**ID** - This is a very common perennial herb with an erect stem of up to 150 cm tall. It has rose-purple flowers in an elongated raceme. The stems are leafy and the leaves are alternate and lanceolate, dark green above and paler with veins beneath. The seeds are in long silk-filled seed pods.

**DISTRIBUTION** - A common fire successional plant, fireweed is found along roads, open woods and in recently burned-over areas.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Young leaves can be used as salad greens or cooked
- The entire plant can be cooked like asparagus when it's younger. More mature fireweed can be eaten when the outer pith is removed, with a sweet glutinous substance within.
- The flower can be eaten as well. Flower buds can be used in salads or teas.
- The roots have been employed to treat enlarged prostates

**BENEFITS** - Fireweed has a very good survival food value because of a relatively high content of Beta-carotene and Vitamin C. It has traditional use by many Indigenous nations of North America as an antiseptic. The tea made from it serves as an intestinal astringent.



**TIP** - *As a survival food, fireweed can be quite effective due to the nutrients therein!*



# GENTIAN

**NAME** - *Gentiana lutea*, or related species

**ID** - They are notable for their mostly large, trumpet-shaped flowers, which are often of an intense blue, but can be white, cream, yellow, or red. The flowers are pentamerous (with 5 lobes in the petals and 5 sepals). They are perennial herb, with a stem from a few centimeters, some reaching up to 1.5 m in height. They have large cylindrical, a forked taproot that is brown externally and white internally. The leaves are glabrous, pale green, generally ovate to oblong

**DISTRIBUTION** - Well over 400 species of *Gentiana* have been identified across both the temperate, alpine and arctic regions of the northern hemisphere and all are more or less used interchangeably. Notable species include *G. purpurea*, *G. pannonicus*, *G. scabra*, *G. punctata* and *G. acaulis* in Europe; *G. macrophylla*, *G. barbata*, *G. scabra* in China; and *G. puberula*, *G. saponaria*, *G. andrewsii*, *G. amarala*, *G. algida*, and *G. acuta*

**PREPARATION/USES** - Gentian is a bitter-tasting plant with the important therapeutic activity of treating digestive disorders. It has been used for indigestion, chronic biliousness, constipation, and intestinal parasites. Gentian stimulates the secretions of the stomach and liver, working gradually to promote the action of the bowels.

**BENEFITS** - Digestion; Antioxidant; Protect the liver from toxins; Antifungal and antibacterial

**CAUTIONS** - Large doses can over-excite the stomach and give a feeling of oppression, thus it is best avoided in irritable conditions of the stomach, bowels, or uterus.



**TIP** - Even though this herb works best if you taste it, it still works quite well if it is encapsulated, so the bitterness is not perceived.



# GUMWEED

**NAME** - *Grindelia integrifolia*, *G. squarrosa*: *Grindelia* = after David Grindel (1717 – 83) German botanist; *integrifolia* = L. “with entire leaves” *squarrosa* = L. “rough”;

**ID** - These biennial and perennial herbs grow from tap roots with glandular leaves and gummy heads. The widely branching stems are 30 – 60 cm tall, often purplish; alternate, narrowly oblong to oblanceolate, serrulate to coarsely toothed. The flower head is yellow and 2 – 3 cm wide. The flower and buds are covered in a milky, thick, balsam-smelling resin.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in dry and often saline prairies from Manitoba to California.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Externally, fresh gumweed or plant tincture can serve as a wash for poison ivy or oak. It can also be applied to burns, rashes and wounds.
- The resin from the herb is used to treat spasmodic respiration problems (ie asthma or dry hacking coughs)
- Gumweed poultice can be used for rheumatic joints, breaks and wounds

**BENEFITS** - Both internally and externally, it can be used to treat many symptoms. Medically, the resin is listed as being antispasmodic, diuretic, expectorant and sedative.

**TIP** - *Gumweed is known to increase excretions*



# HAWTHORN

**NAME** - *Crataegus* spp. *Crataegus* = Kra-tie-gus, from Greek *kratos* (strength), referring to the hard wood

**ID** - Various species grow as shrubs and small trees with stout thorns on their branches. Their leaves are alternate, simple, serrate and sometimes shallowly lobed. The flowers are white and the fruits are berry-like pomes.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Hawthorn is found in thickets, woods and along stream beds throughout the western North America.

**PREPARATION / USES** -

- The berries are edible!
- The fruit and flowers have likewise been used as a herbal tonic with significant benefits to the body especially to the heart.

**BENEFITS** - As a heart tonic, it can normalize blood pressure, angina and be used for arteriosclerosis. They are also a major ingredient in Chinese weight loss programs when consumed over a long period of time.

**TIP** - *As hawthorn berries can be quite mealy, they are best as a jam or jelly. In Chinese culture, they are eaten as a candy.*



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# HORSETAIL

**NAME** - *Equisetum* = L. Horse-hair (a name in Pliny for a horsetail)

**ID** - They are perennial plants with jointed, branched, creeping root stocks. The aerial stems are jointed with scale-like leaves at the nodes, which are encased in a toothed sheath. The internodes are hollow, which branches whorled from the nodes when present.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Horsetails are quite common. They are found in moist and shallow aquatic habitats.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- The inner pulp is quite sweet and can be eaten raw once the outer tissue has been peeled away. Similarly, the roots are tuberous and can be eaten raw in early spring
- Tea can be made from horsetail as well! Use 1 tsp:1 cup of water and steep or simmer gently for 45 minutes in a covered container. After it cools, drink 1 cup 3 times a day
- Young heads of horsetail can be boiled like asparagus; boil for 20 minutes with a change in water. They can also be fried

**BENEFITS** - Horsetail strengthens the heart and lungs, it is beneficial to overall health. It also soothes discomfort caused by difficulty in urination, aids in strengthening connective tissue and can help internal bleeding of various types.

**CAUTIONS** - Excessive dosages can lead to symptoms of poisoning. Some authors define "excessive" as high as 20% of body weight. There are several chemicals in this plant with slightly toxic effects typically resulting in the destruction of thiamine (a B vitamin). Consumption of B vitamins will speedily reverse major side effects.



# JUNIPER BERRIES

**NAME** - *Juniperus spp: Juniperus* = yoo-ni-pe-rus, from the Latin

**ID** - Various species of juniper grow as shrubs and small trees. They have leaves that are scale-like or awl-shaped and are arranged opposite or whorled on the branches. The pollen and seed cones can be borne together on the same plant or on different plants. Seed cones are berry like, greenish the first year and bluish when ripe the second, containing 1-4 seeds.

**DISTRIBUTION** - These plants grow throughout North America except on the prairies.

**PREPARATION / USES** -

- All species contain edible berries. They're best when ripe in the fall of second year / spring of third year when they are purple/bluish and can be used to flavour stew or meat.
- In addition, the berries can also be roasted and ground as a coffee substitute.
- The needles can serve as an incense. When burned, they can cleanse a house and drive out infectious disease.

**BENEFITS** - Juniper is well known as an excellent diuretic that can clean out the kidney and bladder; it is especially effective for dissolving stones. A strong tea of the berries can serve as a disinfectant. Tea made from berries can stimulate hydrochloric acid production in the stomach to expel gas as well.

**CAUTIONS** - If the kidneys are already weak, juniper oil can be irritating. An accompanying demulcent, such as marshmallow root, can alleviate this.



**TIP** - *Black beads can be made from the berries. You can string them on a small sliver of wood and let them dry. After they have dried, pour grease on the fire and smoke the dried berries in the thick smoke, which turns them black. The beads are then polished and strung and can be interspersed with wolf willow beads.*

# LAMB'S QUARTERS

**NAME** - *Chenopodium album*: *Chenopodium* = kay-no-pod-dee-um, from Greek *chen* (goose) and *podion* (foot) referring to the shape of the leaves; *album* = L. "dead-white"

**ID** - It's a stout multi-branched annual from 30-100 cm high varying in appearance. The dense compound flower clusters are white with a bluish tinge. The leaves are green above and densely mealy beneath. The leaf shape varies from ovate, rhombic to lanceolate, with the larger leaves being irregularly-toothed. The branches often turn reddish late in the season. The dense seeds are black.

**DISTRIBUTION** - An introduced weed, it is found in gardens, along roadsides and on waste areas.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- The herb is good in a salad, or as a pot herb and can be prepared like spinach.
- In order to use it medically, the leaves should be bruised and applied as a poultice to the forehead, where it can treat several symptoms.
- If the seeds are ground into a meal, it can be quite good in bread. The flour will resemble buckwheat in color and taste, and is considered as being equally nutritious. Seeds can also be eaten raw.

**BENEFITS** - Contains large amounts of beta-carotene and vitamin C. It is also excellent for relieving heat from too much sun or a headache.

**TIP** - *The entire plant can be boiled and used as a crude green dye.*



**CAUTIONS** - As it contains quite high levels of oxalic acid, large quantities should not be eaten.

**HISTORY** - Lamb's quarters gets its name from its mealy leaves and its love of manure. It is also called pigweed. In England, it was known as midden myles. The saying went "boil myles in water and chop them into butter and you will have a good dish".





# MEADOW RUE

**NAME** - *Thalictrum dasycarpum*, *T. occidentale*; *Thalictrum*  
= tha-lik-trum, from the Greek

**ID** - An erect perennial herb, meadow rue is 50 – 100 cm tall with a yellowish root. Its basal and stem leaves are 2-3 ternate, the leaflet usually obovate-cuneate or orbicular, 3-lobed and coarsely crenate with the petioles dilated at the sheathing bases. The flowers rest in small, numerous clusters that resemble chandeliers. The petal-like sepals are greenish.

**DISTRIBUTION** - In moist woods and meadows.

**PREPARATION / USES** -

- Young leaves taste like Chinese snow peas and can be consumed as such in salads or as a cooking green
- Infusion of the roots is used to reduce fevers. They are also chewed to reduce phlegm and improve blood circulation

**BENEFITS** - The many uses of meadow rue make it a versatile herb. Not only is it easily consumable, there are also many medicinal properties that are beneficial.

**TIP** - *Due to its pleasant taste reminiscent of green peas, young spring leaves make a great addition to salads.*



# MULLEIN

**NAME** - *Verbascum blattaria*, *V. thapsus*: *Verbascum* = verbas-kum, from its classical Latin name in Pliny; *thapsus* = thap-sus, from a town in Sicily or from the isle of Thapsos, now Magnise; *blattaria* = bla-tah-ree-a, L. “cockroach-like”;

**ID** - A biennial herb, mullein ranges from 30-200 cm tall. The leaves are alternate, elliptical to oblanceolate, 10 – 40 cm long. The lower leaves have petioles while the upper leaves are sessile. The flowers are in spike-like racemes and are bright yellow.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Mullein grows in waste areas, along railroad tracks, dry meadows and pastures.

**PREPARATION / USES** - Though it is not used as a food plant, there are many medicinal uses.

- Indigenous peoples smoked the dried leaves to relieve lung congestion. Herbalists have found it useful for coughs, colds and lungs congestion as well
- The flowers, when infused in tea, can help induce sleep and reduce pain
- Its leaves are very soft and soothing to the skin and can be used to treat diaper rash

**BENEFITS** - The versatility of the plant given its numerous domestic uses makes it quite a good plant to know. In addition to the aforementioned uses, it can be a good lamp wick, torch or even toilet paper.

**TIP** - *Mullein was introduced from Europe. Its leaves can even be used as a glove to pick stinging nettles!*



# PEPPERMINT

**NAME** - *Mentha x piperita*.

**ID** - The plant can grow to 2-3 feet with small purple or white flowers. They are most easily identified by their leaves, which are dark green and fragrant.

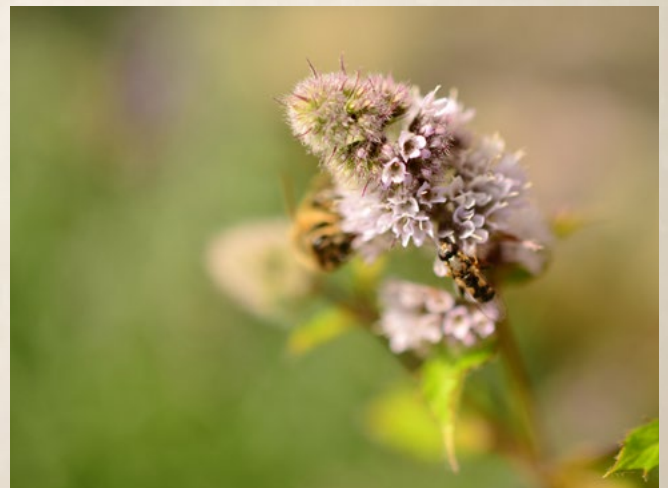
**DISTRIBUTION** - Grows in the moist soils of the warmer parts of Europe, Asia, and America.

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- Tea is one of the most popular ways to use the leaves as well as stem, and provides many medicinal benefits in addition to flavour
- The essential oil provides excellent pain relief. It also repels insects
- Given its pleasant smell, the herb is also used for a myriad of cosmetic / perfume purposes

**BENEFITS** - Peppermint can ease sinus infections, inflammation, mucous, and given its high menthol content, is very effective in treating colds. It also provides relief for those suffering from abdominal issues such as irritable bowel syndrome. It also has antioxidant properties and is antibacterial as well, and can treat gastrointestinal bacteria.

**TIP** - *In the United States, 1,000,000 pounds of peppermint oil is produced annually*



# PINEAPPLE WEED

**NAME** - *Matricaria matricarioides*: *Matricaria* = may-tri-care-ee-a, from Latin *matrix* (mother) and *caria* (dear), referring to its medicinal use for females and colic.

**ID** - Pineapple weed is an annual, 10 – 40 cm tall with a non-rayed composite flower head and pinnate leaves. It's often mistaken for chamomile, but can be distinguished by its white rays.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in waste areas such as cracks in the sidewalk and along many backwood dirt roads

## **PREPARATION / USES** -

- Good as finger food or in salads
- Much like chamomile, it makes a delicious tea and is in fact sweeter. The Blackfoot Nation used it as a perfume. It can also serve as an effective insect repellent

**BENEFITS** - It is used for stomach aches, flatulence and can be a mild relaxant for colds and menstrual problems. Externally, it can be used for treating itching and sores.

**TIP** - *As a key for identifying it as well, the herb does smell like pineapples!*

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# PLANTAIN, COMMON

**NAME** - *Plantago major* & related spp: *Plantago* = plan-ta-go, sole of the foot. Some West Coast Indigenous peoples call this the “white-man-foot-print”, as it came with them and could be found everywhere they went.

**ID** - Common plantain has a flowering stalk 10 – 30 cm high, topped by a dense spike of greenish or sometimes white flowers. The leaves, all basal, are broad, oval to ovate. Though it is easily recognizable, it has many variable features.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found growing along roadsides and in waste areas and lawns.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Young leaves can be eaten raw like lettuce. When they're older and tougher, they're better cooked. Chopping it can make it easier to eat
- Chewed leaves are a good poultice for bites and stings, particularly for wasp stings. The herb is even said to draw poison out of snake bites

**BENEFITS** - Plantain is high in vitamins C, A and K. Medicinally this plant is listed as alterative, astringent, diuretic and antiseptic. The seeds are high in mucilage and have been shown to lower cholesterol as well.

**TIP** - *Make an easy “spit” poultice for wasp stings and mosquito bites. Simply chew 1-2 leaves well and apply directly to the sting. Keep in place with a bandage.*



# RASPBERRY LEAF

**NAME** - *Rubus* sp: *Rubus* = the Latin name for brambles or the blackberry

**ID** - This genus has many diverse forms. The common wild raspberry is an erect shrub that stands up to 2 m tall with white, terminal flowers. The stem has prickles and the leaves are pinnate, green above and white and hairy below. The leaf margins are doubly serrated. The fruit is red, falling intact from the dry receptacle.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Raspberry is commonly found along roadsides, river banks and in wooded regions.

## PREPARATION/USES -

- In addition to the berry, many parts of *Rubus* is edible. Its flowers are delicious in salads and young shoots can be peeled and eaten as well.
- Its leaves can be made into a tea that stops upcoming flus and colds
- When the leaves and roots are made into an infusion, it is an excellent remedy for diarrhea

This tea is also used to prevent miscarriage, increase milk flow and reduce labour pains. Pregnant women should drink this tea at least once a day for the duration of the pregnancy but especially in the last three months. The tea is also valuable for menstrual problems, decreasing the flow without stopping it too abruptly. Raspberry leaves are soothing and toning to the stomach and bowels. The berries are mildly laxative. *Rubus idaeus* (L. from Mount Ida, Crete or northwest Turkey) is the domestic red raspberry. It is as useful as the wild one for all the above treatments. *Rubus parviflorus* (L. "small-flowered") was often eaten by the



Blackfoot Nation to treat chest disorders.

**TIPS** - *The leaves are already quite potent on their own. However, when combined with other herbs, the results are even more powerful*



# RED CLOVER

**NAME** - *Trifolium* spp. *Trifolium* = tri-fo-lee-um, from Latin *tri* (three) and *folium* (leaf);

**ID** - Clover is so familiar that one hardly needs a description of it. Suffice it to say that clover is found in waste places, escaping cultivation. It is often found in lawns, roadsides and disturbed soil.

**PREPARATION / USES** - Clover is one of those plants that can be eaten in its entirety. It should be sparingly eaten when raw because it can cause bloating (though completely harmless) when cooked. The bloating effect is decreased if the plant is first soaked in salt water. Clover is high in protein, making it a nutritious meal. As a tea, clover is excellent, especially the dried flowers and seeds.

Red Clover flowers are alterative, sedative, deobstructive, diuretic and expectorant. For stimulating the liver and gall bladder, an infusion of clover flowers is often used. Clover can also help in cases of constipation, sluggish appetite, skin problems, whooping cough, bronchial and renal conditions. A strong tea of clover flowers can assist as a gargle for sore mouths and throats, acting as a mild sedative. This tea can also be used both as a rectal and vaginal injection.

Externally, clover tea is used as a fomentation for rheumatic or gout pain and to soften hard milk glands. As a poultice, it is useful for athlete's foot and other skin problems. A good salve can be made from clover flowers for applying to external cancers and indolent ulcers.

The recommended dosage is to take 2 tsp. of the flowers and steep them in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water for 10 minutes. Take 1 to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups a day, in mouthful doses at any one time. The tincture dosage is 5-30 drops in water.



# ROSEMARY

**NAME** - *Rosmarinus officinalis*

**ID** - A perennial, woody herb, rosemary has a fibrous root system. It is best known for its fragrant leaves, which are evergreen and needle-like. Its flowers can be purple, white, blue or pink.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Native to the Mediterranean, it is now found all over the world and can be considered invasive in some areas.

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- It is a popular culinary herb. Quite aromatic, it is commonly used for roasting meats or flavouring stews
- As an extraction, it can be used as a hair wash that prevents baldness
- It can also be consumed as a tea that alleviates colds and headaches

**BENEFITS** - Though it is most commonly used in a culinary context, it is also a popular fragrance oil in many cosmetics. Medically, it has astringent, diaphoretic and stimulant properties. In parts of Europe and Australia, it is used as a mourning herb.

**TIP** - *As a decorative plant, if left to grow, it can be trimmed and shaped like topiary in your garden*

**CAUTIONS** - Pregnant women should not consume in large amounts.





# SHEPHERD'S PURSE

**NAME** - *Capsella bursa-pastoris*: *Capsella* = cap-sel-la, meaning little box, referring to the seed pod or the form of the fruit; *bursa-pastoris* = bur-sa-pas-tor-is, meaning pastoral purse – “shepherd’s purse”, referring to the seed pod.

**ID** - Shepherd’s purse is an annual herb 10 – 50 cm high. The flowers are small and white borne in terminal racemes. The basal leaves are deeply cleft, while the stem leaves are sessile, lanceolate to linear. The seed pods are triangular and flattened.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found as a weed in fields, gardens, lawns and pathways.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Young leaves can be used as a pot herb. They can be blanched to remove some flavour
- Indigenous peoples gathered the ripened pods and beat out the seeds, which can be soaked, roasted ground of parched
- The entire pod can be added to salads, soups or dried for winter storage and tastes like ginger

**BENEFITS** - Medically, it is astringent, diuretic, antiscorbutic, styptic and a vasoconstrictor. An extract of the herb or infusion of the dried leaf is an effective blood coagulant and can be used internally or externally. It also acts on the circulatory system to equalize blood pressure.

**TIP** - *Its seeds can be used to ward off mosquitos. People used to sprinkle the seed on the water where mosquitoes breed and let the mucilage do the work. One pound of seeds can destroy ten million larvae!*

**HISTORY** - The name comes from the triangular or heart-shaped seed pod which looks similar to an old-fashioned European shepherd’s bag.

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# ST. JOHN'S WORT

**NAME** - *Hypericum perforatum*

**ID** - Growing up to 1 meter high, the plant is easily distinguishable by its leaves, which have translucent dots that become more obvious when held to the light. They are also opposite, narrow and oblong. Its flowers are bright yellow, with petals growing in groups of five.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in sunny places with dry soils, such as fields or pastures

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- It is best known as a treatment against depression in the form of liquid extracts or pills and have far less side effects than traditional antidepressants. Similarly, it can also help treat anxiety
- Topically, the oil from the plant helps skin conditions such as eczema

**BENEFITS** - Though it is most famous for its ability to treat nervous disorders, the plant also has quite a few medical properties: it is astringent, diuretic and digestive.

**TIP** - *The plant is named after St. John the Baptist as it was said to bloom around his birthday*

**CAUTIONS** - Increases sensitivity to sunlight. It can also interact with other drugs, so it's best to consult a healthcare professional first.



# STINGING NETTLE

**NAME** - *Urtica urens* & *gracilis*. From the Latin, meaning “stinging/burning” and “graceful”

**ID** - This herb is upright and annual, from 20-40 cm high with stinging hairs on the stems and leaves. The flowers are green-white and droop in clusters from the stalk; the leaves are opposite, ovate to broadly elliptical, 3 to 5 nerved and toothed.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Although it is an introduced weed, stinging nettle is widely available in the region

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Known around the world as a pot herb, the tender shoots or pink underground stem parts of nettle are best for this purpose
- Nettle roots are also great roasted
- Most importantly, nettle juice and tea can stop internal bleeding. For example, if someone were spitting up blood due to hemorrhage of the lungs and stomach and blood passing from the urinary organs, the decoction or fresh juice squeezed from nettle leaves is the best known treatment. The dose is one tablespoon of the juice per hour. This is a first aid remedy and of course, as soon as available, you should seek out professional advice on the internal bleeding's cause. The liquid can also be used to treat excessive menstrual flow

**TIP** - *Nettle is a little bland-tasting, so be sure to mix it with other foods or seasonings, such as vinegar and butter.*

**BENEFITS** - Nettles are high in vitamins A, C and D (which is rare in plants). It also contains iron, sodium, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, silica and albuminoids. Medicinally, nettles are listed as diuretic, astringent, tonic, pectoral antispasmodic (specific for the respiratory system), galactagogue and hemostatic.

**CAUTIONS** - Like the name suggests, these nettles sting! The hairs / bristles covering the plants are hollow and can act as hypodermic needles with formic acid that can feel like a histamine compound if stung. Although the stinging effect is not bad and completely destroyed by cooking, be sure to wear leather gloves or carefully pick the stalk with your thumb and two fingers, turning the hairs aside in the process. Surprisingly, the antidote for the sting is found in the nettles themselves.



# VALERIAN

**NAME** - *Valeriana septentrionalis*: *Valeriana* = va-lee-ree-ah-na, from the Latin medieval name *valere* (to be healthy or “health”) because of the medicinal qualities; *septentrionalis* = L. “of the north”

**ID** - A slender stemmed perennial, 30 – 70 cm tall. The white flowers are small and sessile in compound cymes. The basal leaves are elliptical, lanceolate or spatulate. The stem leaves are opposite and pinnate, with 3 – 7 leaflets. The rootstock is scented.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Widespread in moist meadows and boggy places

## PREPARATION / USES -

- A related species, *valeriana edulis*, is edible. The large roots are slightly poisonous raw but neutralized during cooking. Although taste improves, the root still remains nutritious. The roots are best collected in the spring or summer
- Early spring leaves are an excellent mix with egg dishes as a “spice”
- Valerian is also an excellent nerve tonic. It’s most effective when combined with skullcap, blue vervain and European mistletoe

**BENEFITS** - Valerian is useful in all sorts of nervous conditions, such as migraines and insomnia. It is useful in epileptic fits, St. Vitus dance, nervous derangement or irritations, debility and menstrual pain.

**CAUTIONS** - Valerian should never be boiled. Large doses also cause poisoning.



**TIP** - Cats love valerian (much like catnip), so you may have to keep your valerian ‘secure’.



# WATER LILY

**NAME** - *Nymphaea* spp: *Nymphaea* = nimf-ie-a, from L. *Nymphe* (Theophrastus name after the water nymphs);

**ID** - This aquatic perennial herb has a rootstock with erect rhizome. The flower is white with purplish lines. The leaf blades are 5-12 cm long and 3-7 cm wide and have green or purplish undersides.

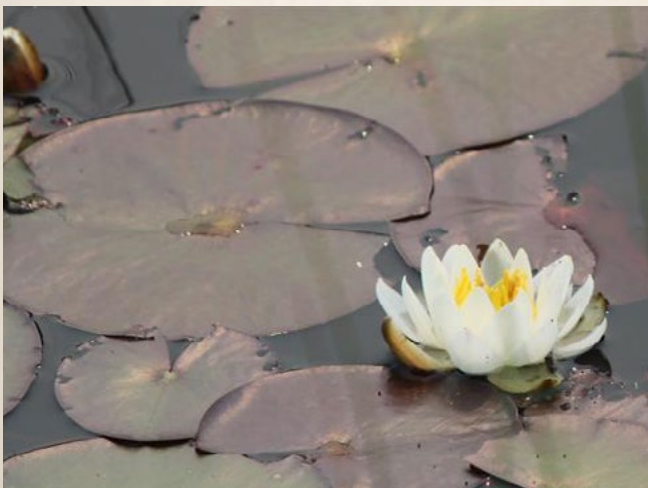
**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in lakes and ponds

## PREPARATION / USES -

- The plant can be eaten: young leaves are good in soups and flower buds can be eaten raw or pickled
- A tea made of the roots is an effective gargle for irritation or inflammation of the throat
- Its main use is as an antiseptic douche. First Nations peoples have used it for generations in cases of leucorrhea or to increase the health of the womb

**BENEFITS** - The roots are listed as antiseptic, astringent, demulcent and emollient. In addition to the uses listed above, water lily has also been used as chest medicine, for asthma and tuberculosis. It is a very effective ingredient in smoothing skin!

**TIP** - *At one point the plant was known as 'breastweed' after its use for inflamed breasts*



# WILD CHERRY BARK

**NAME** - *Prunus serotina*, *P. virginiana*

**PREPARATION/USES** -

- The bark is commonly made into a cough remedy by steeping or mixing with other herbs. Internally, this provides many benefits to the throat for a number of ailments
- Externally, the tea can be used on cuts to take down inflammation and soothe irritation
- Similarly, it can be an excellent wash for inflamed eyes

**BENEFITS** - It has many medicinal properties that the First Nations people utilized. First and foremost, it is great to treat sore throats and coughs. It has been used in many tonics and syrups to alleviate those symptoms. In addition, wild cherry bark is a digestive stimulant and has been used to treat jaundice as well.



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# WILD ROSE

**NAME** - *Rosa acicularis*; *Rosa* = ro-sa, from the classical name for various roses; *acicularis* = L. "needle-shaped"

**ID** - Wild rose is the floral emblem of Alberta and grows 30 – 120 cm high. The flowers are usually pink with the occasional white petal. The leaves are pinnate with 5-7 coarsely serrated leaflets. It has branches densely covered with straight slender bristles.

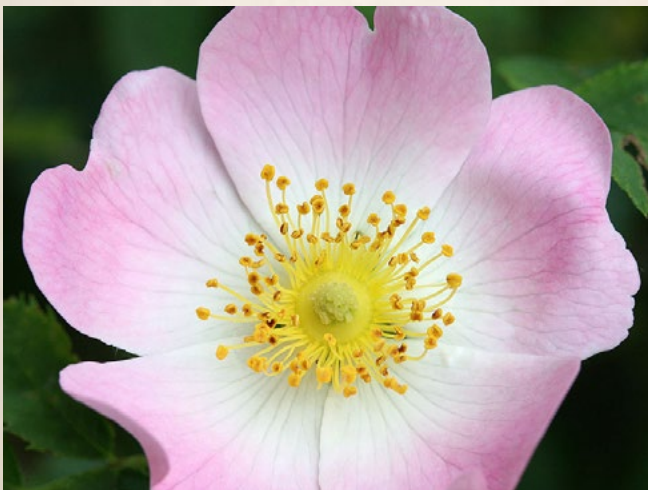
**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in forested regions, along roadsides, and on open slopes.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- Fresh petals are delightful and can be consumed without any additives. They can also be candied or used in salads
- While the rose fruits (rose hips) can also be eaten raw, stewed, candied, they can be made into preserves as well
- Indigenous peoples used the seeds to treat muscular pains. When made into a drink, it could help treat diarrhea or the flu as well

**BENEFITS** - The hips of this plant are extremely high in Vitamin C and also contain Vitamin E, B, K and beta-carotene. Depending on how it is used, it can alleviate heartburn, as a gargle for a sore throat or to cleanse the blood. It is also an excellent herb to coagulate blood.

**TIP** - *A poultice of its leaves can also be used to relieve insect stings.*



# WILLOW

**NAME** - *Salix spp.* *Salix* = Sa-likes, from the classical Latin name for willows

**ID** - There are many species of *Salix* in the area. It can grow as shrubs, or occasionally small trees with narrow leaves. Their flowers and fruits are borne as catkins.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Found in wet places such as river banks, marshes and swampy areas.

**PREPARATION / USES** -

- Young shoots and leaves can be eaten raw. The inner bark can be eaten raw as well
- Given the flexibility of willow branches, they are quite useful for household or camp needs, such as woven items or handles
- Leaves have an astringent quality that is effective when placed on cuts and wounds

**BENEFITS** - Chemically, the inner bark of willow contains salicin, which is similar to aspirin and useful as a substitute. A tea from the bark excretes in the urine as salicylic acid and can be used for irritability of the urinary tract. An infusion of the root can be used for sexually transmitted infections or internal bleeding as well.

**TIP** - *Both Willow & Meadowsweet are sources of salicin. Salicin was chemically synthesized as acetylsalicylic acid in the mid 1800's and named Aspirin by Bayer in 1899.*





# WORMWOOD

**NAME** - *Artemisia spp.*: *Artemisia* = after the Greek goddess Artemis or after Queen Artemisia of Caria, Asia Minor

**ID** - There are many species in the area and they vary in shape from herbs to small shrubs. However, they are usually quite aromatic, with alternate leaves and entire or dissected with tubular flowers. These plants are mostly grey and vary from 20 – 200 cm tall, most being less than 40 cm.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Wormwoods are usually found in dry places or in well drained south-facing slopes throughout the area.

## **PREPARATION/USES** -

- In all species of the plant, the fruit and seeds may be eaten. They can be dried and pounded into a meal or eaten raw
- A tea made from the leaves is a good cure for colds, sore eyes and also used as a hair tonic
- The herb is excellent for controlling menstrual flow and alleviating cramps

**BENEFITS** - Wormwood has a myriad of uses and benefits. Most notably, it protects the liver after consumption of fatty foods, lowers secretion of stomach acids and as the name suggests, is excellent for ridding the body of worms. Externally, the leaves could stop swelling when chewed up and applied to skin. Many Indigenous peoples used it in spiritual contexts, such as to cleanse ones spirit or as flooring in sweatlodges.



# YARROW

**NAME** - *Achillea millefolium*: *Achillea* = a-kil-lee-a, after Achilles of Greek mythology; *millefolium* = meel-lee-fo-lee-um, “thousand-leaved”, referring to its densely pinnated leaves.

**ID** - An aromatic herb 30-70 cm high, yarrow has composite flower heads in a flat-topped inflorescence. The flowers are white or rarely pink. The alternate leaves are very finely pinnated or plume-like with woolly hairs.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Open, sunny and well-drained places. It is a pioneer species and tends to be found on disturbed soils. Because it prefers well drained areas, it is often found in slightly gravelly locales. It is also common in pastures.

## PREPARATION / USES -

- When taken hot in an infusion, it will increase body temperature, open pores, stimulate perspiration and equalize circulation, making it one of the best herbs for colds and fevers
- Yarrow leaves tied to a wound will stop bleeding quickly and aid in the healing process. Green leaves would be best, although dried leaves and the flower heads can work as well
- If you have a nosebleed, sticking a roll of yarrow up your nose will stop it

**BENEFITS** - Yarrow is reported to be diaphoretic, diuretic, stimulant, astringent and tonic. It is a strong and soothing diaphoretic as well. Depending on the usage, it is quite beneficial to women by reducing hot flashes, excessive menstrual flow and speeding up childbirth and to deliver afterbirth (placenta).

**TIP** - *Yarrow sun dries, standing from fall till spring as a brown skeleton of its former self.*

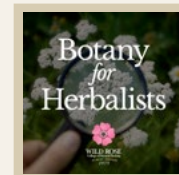
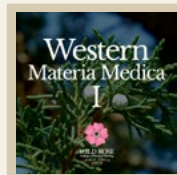
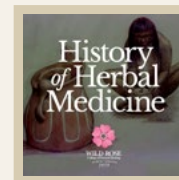
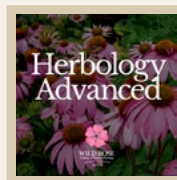
**HISTORY** - The legend behind the generic name “Achillea” goes back many years to when Achilles made an ointment from the yarrow to heal wounds of his soldiers after the Battle of Troy. The legend says he first learned of its uses from Chiron the Centaur. Another version of the legend says that Achilles was dunked into yarrow tea at birth, making all but the heel he was held by invincible.



# CONCLUSION

Thank you for allowing us to take you through a brief look at these medicinal herbs. We hope you found something interesting about the diverse benefits that herbs (and your surroundings!) can offer. Of course, learning is a never ending journey. Should you like to find out more about herb history, anatomy, identification, or potential uses, feel free to check out [wildrosecollege.com](http://wildrosecollege.com), where we've gathered together the most extensive information on herbology and other aspects of wholistic health. If you would like to try any of these herbs yourself, [harmonicarts.ca](http://harmonicarts.ca) is also available for all your herbal needs. We hope you enjoyed this look into the vast world of herbology, and hope to see you soon.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



## Dr. Terry Willard

COLLEGE FOUNDER

Terry Willard, Cl.H., Ph.D. is recognized as one of North America's leading Clinical Herbalists. After over 40 years of clinical practice and teaching, he is now in semi-retirement. He spends most of his time writing, formulating nutritional products and researching. He is the author of 12 books. Terry has spent many years representing the Health Food industry interests at both federal and provincial levels. He is the past president of the Canadian Council of Herbalist Associations, past president of Canadian Association of Herbal Practitioner and a professional member of the American Herbalist Guild.



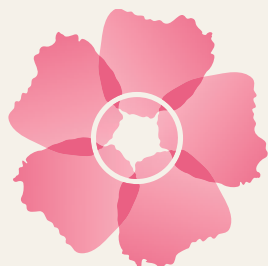
## Yarrow Willard

COLLEGE DIRECTOR

Yarrow Willard is a Clinical/Master Herbalist, co-visionary of Harmonic Arts Botanical Dispensary and current director of Wild Rose College.

As the son of Terry Willard, original founder and creator of Wild Rose College, he has been immersed in the world of plant medicine since before he was born and is continually updating his knowledge with the growing edge science of re-claiming wellness.

Yarrow lives on Vancouver Island, British Columbia off the West coast of Canada and divides his time between Harmonic Arts Botanical Dispensary, Wild Rose College, his family and his personal passion for sharing the healing power of medicinal plants.



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