Herbal Medicine from
Your
Garden or Windowsill

7

Home Remedies from Weeds & Wild Flowers

Frann Leach

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One man's weed is another man's wild flower

This book is about weeds and wildflowers. However, just because I describe plants that grow wild all over the place, that does not mean I'm advocating collection from habitat.

You may consider a plant to be a weed, but this doesn't mean that it isn't a protected plant. Wishing to collect weeds would have been a sign of madness in the 1950s, but nowadays it could be a ticket to a criminal record unless you either (a) are a licensed plant collector with the appropriate knowledge and skills, or (b) you know for a fact that the plant in question is not protected.

At the time of writing, I think you can take it as read that stinging nettles and chickweed are not protected. However in years to come, the way our biodiversity is falling apart due either to global warming (if that's on your radar) or some other as yet unexplained cause, this may not be the case. Do yourself a favor and check the conservation status of any plant you are planning to collect, and if it's protected, don't gather any at all unless you have a license and the knowledge to do so in a diversity-friendly way.

There are, of course, many other medicinal plants that could be considered weeds, wildflowers or both. Those covered so far are: costmary, cowslip, primrose and tormentil in volume 3; wild celery, dandelion, fat hen, good King Henry, heartsease, lovage, green purslane, ramsons and sorrel in volume 4; alkanet, betony, bistort, bloodroot, butterfly weed, cornflower, gayfeather, greater knapweed, meadowsweet, Queen Anne's lace, some types of rose and teasel in volume 5; and arnica, basil thyme, bethroot,

great burdock, great burnet, mountain cornflower, gravel root, Mexican marigold, soapwort, spotted cranesbill, Mexican tea, viper's bugloss and woad in volume 6.

You might be surprised that there is nothing in volume 2. This is because culinary herbs have been cultivated for so long that they can no longer be regarded as wild, whatever their origins. In fact, some are no longer found in the wild, and others cannot grow outside cultivation, as they have lost the ability to propagate themselves.

Medicinal herbs covered in this issue include: spiny amaranth, wild basil, lady's bedstraw, greater celandine, German chamomile, chickweed, coltsfoot, comfrey, white deadnettle, curled dock, sweet flag, fumitory, European goldenrod, goosegrass, wild lettuce, great mullein, nettles, wild onion, American pennyroyal, poppy, herb Robert, selfheal, thoroughwort, Indian tobacco, blue vervain and wormseed.

Why organic growing methods are important

Readers of my blog Herbal Medicine from Your Garden will be aware that I always say that herbs and other plants grown for medicinal use should be grown organically. The primary reason for this is safety.

Research has shown that pesticides and other chemicals used on food crops are still present in the products on sale in the greengrocers, but really who needed scientists to tell us that? We know that plants absorb energy and water from the soil, rain (or other liquids which land on them), and the air. They just suck it up through their roots (and sometimes their leaves). What they take in becomes part of the plant, its fruit and seeds.

Although the levels of pesticides in a herb used in cooking, say, may be low enough that we needn't be concerned about putting a pinch into a meal intended for several people, and further watered down by the meal itself, there is a big difference when it comes to remedies.

Remedies use comparatively large quantities of plant material, and are prepared in a way that concentrates the plant extracts. The active constituents of any remedy are themselves chemicals, and it isn't surprising that these chemicals interreact with foreign chemicals such as pesticides. This interreaction may be entirely benign, of course, but it's more likely that at the least the efficacy of the remedy will be reduced, and in some cases the result may be that the effects are entirely changed.

For this reason, **it's really only safe to grow herbs or other plants for medicinal use organically**.

Organic gardening really just means that instead of pesticides, you might cover the crop with fleece, and instead of chemical fertilizers, you use natural ones. Most herbs don't need any fertilization or pest control, anyway. They contain volatile oils that tend to be unpalatable to most pests, and often grow best in poor soil, because they are closer to their wild cousins than many other plants.

Safety First

Herbs may not look much in many cases but many of them are potentially deadly. If you have them in your garden, and you have kids (or you ever allow children into your garden), you need to know this stuff. One or two are so poisonous, you could die ***just from handling them too much***. So never use a herb unless you're sure of its identification.

Before using any remedy for the first time, it's best to do a **patch test** by putting a small quantity of the oil or cream to be tested, about the size of a penny, on an area of skin such as the inner forearm, where it is unlikely to be affected by anything else. Leave it for 24 hours and if there is no adverse reaction, then you can go ahead and use the product.

Remedies in this book which can be used during pregnancy

It's ok to use a pinch of some herb in cooking, even if you're pregnant, but when it comes to using them for remedies, the quantities used are much greater and the concentration very much higher. **Most herbs are not recommended for use by pregnant women**.

Only three of the remedies listed in this issue are ok to use as remedies when you're pregnant. These are goosegrass, herb Robert (in small quantities) and wild onion.

Please remember we're all different; if you use any of the herbs listed here as safe and get some sort of adverse reaction, stop using it, and don't use it again either in medicine or food until after the birth. It's a good idea to allow 6 weeks after the birth before carefully reintroducing the offending herb to your diet, so that your hormones are back to normal levels (which may be the problem), keeping an eye out for further reactions, and making a decision as to future use accordingly. Sometimes, pregnancy can act as a trigger, activating an intolerance we weren't aware of before, and in other cases you just find that some things upset you while you're pregnant and are fine once you've had the baby.

Spiny Amaranth

(Carelessweed, Ci Xian, Edlebur, Needlebur, Prickly Amaranth, Prickly Calalu, Prince of Wales Feather, Spiny Pigweed, Thorny Amaranth or Thorny Pigweed)

Amaranthus spinosus, Amaranthaceae

Hardy annual. 60cm (2'), Full sun or semi-shade, any well drained moist soil. Prefers a hot sunny situation with some shelter.

If growing to eat or for use in remedies, spiny amaranth must be grown organically. Sow seed direct in late Spring or early Spring under cover and plant out after last Spring frost date. Can also be propagated from cuttings.

Pick leaves and young shoots as required for use fresh. Cut whole plants and use fresh or dried.

Closely related to Prince's feather (also sometimes called Prince of Wales Feather).

NB: Do not use during the first trimester of pregnancy or if trying for a baby.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion internally for **diarrhea** and **heavy periods**. Use externally as a douche for **vaginal discharge**, as a mouthwash for **canker sores** (**mouth ulcers**) or as a gargle for **sore throat**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Remove spines and cook the leaves as a vegetable similar to spinach and rich in nutrients. The seeds are harvested for use as flour in baking, useful for celiacs and other gluten intolerants.

Other

Yellow, green and red dyes can be obtained from different parts, or with different mordants.

Wild Basil

(Cushion Calamint, Dogmint or Wood Basil)

Clinopodium vulgare syn. *Calamintha clinopodium* and *Satureja vulgaris, Lamiaceae*

Hardy perennial. 50cm (1'8") x 50cm (1'8"), Full sun or partial shade, any moist soil.

Sow under cover in Spring, barely covering with soil. Keep warm and moist. Prick out and pot on, planting out in the Summer if large enough, or in late Spring the following year. Can also be propagated by division in Spring and by softwood cuttings late Spring/early Summer.

Pick leaves as required, the main harvest at flowering can be dried for later use.

There is another plant, native to Asia, called "wild basil" — this is *Ocimum canum*. The plant described here is not closely related to that plant, or to sweet basil, holy basil or basil thyme.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/1 ounce dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion as a **heart tonic**, **expectorant**, and to treat **flatulence** ("**gas**" or "**wind**").

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

The wild basil used in aromatherapy is *Ocimum canum*, not the one referred to here.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to bees. Ornamental.

In the Kitchen

Wild basil is sometimes used for tea, or for flavoring in a similar way to basil. It can also be added to salads, although in my opinion, the furry leaves would take a bit of getting used to, even if finely chopped.

Other

Brown and yellow dyes from leaves.

Lady's Bedstraw

(Cheese Rennet, Cheese Renning, Maid's Hair, Petty Mugget or Yellow Bedstraw)

Galium verum, Rubiaceae

Hardy perennial. 60cm (2') x 1m (3'), Full sun, moist well drained neutral to alkaline soil.

Invasive.

Sow ripe seed in Summer or divide existing stock in Spring or Fall.

Cut plants when flowering and dry for medicinal use. Collect whole plants in Fall and divide into top parts for yellow and roots for red dye.

Lady's bedstraw is closely related to goosegrass (catchweed bedstraw) and many other bedstraws, in fact the *Galium* genus (with 617 species according to Wikipedia) is known as the bedstraw genus.

NB: Do not use if you are trying to get pregnant.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/1 ounce dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

Lady's bedstraw is **diuretic** and **anti-spasmodic**. Use a standard infusion for **kidney and bladder complaints**, and externally as a poultice on **cuts**, **skin infections**, **slow-healing wounds** etc.

Native Americans used lady's bedstraw as a **contraceptive** to prevent pregnancy.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Flowering stems produce a yellow food dye. Chopped whole plant can be used as a substitute for rennet to curdle milk. Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked.

Other

The dried plant has the scent of new mown hay. Attractive to wildlife and a food plant for some species of butterfly. Dye plant for wool: roots + alum = light red; roots + chrome = purplish red; flowering tops + alum and chrome = yellow.

Greater Celandine

(Bai Qu Cai, Celandine, Chelidonium, Garden Celandine, Great Celandine, Nipplewort, Swallow Wort or Tetterwort)

Chelidonium majus, Papaveraceae

Hardy perennial. 50cm (20") x 40cm (16"), Full sun to full shade, any moist soil.

An agressive invader which is difficult to eradicate once established. The best way to control it is to pull plants up before seeds start to ripen around July. As it's also a common weed for the same reason, you may prefer to gather plants from the wild, taking care to avoid areas close to heavy traffic.

For herbal use, harvest leaves just as they come into flower, for use fresh or dried. Roots should be lifted in Fall and dried before use. Latex (sap) needs to be collected from freshly cut stems at the time it is needed.

Not related to lesser celandine, common milkweed (also called swallow-wort) or pleurisy root (aka orange or silky swallow-wort). Related to bloodroot (with which it shares the alternative name tetterwort).

NB: Greater celandine is not suitable for use by pregnant women. Only use latex externally and with caution. A side effect of taking greater celandine is that the urine turns bright yellow, but this is nothing to worry about.

Standard infusion: 1 level tsp chopped root/leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz). Steep 30 minutes. Take when cold.
Dosage: up to 125ml (½ US cup, 4 fl oz) a day.

Use a standard infusion internally for **arthritis** and **rheumatism**, **asthma**, **skin cancer** and **stomach cancer**, **bronchitis** and other **coughs**, inflammation of the **gall bladder** and **bile duct**, **gout** and **hepatitis** (**jaundice**).

The bright orange latex should be mixed with vinegar before using it externally for **corns**, **psoriasis**, **tinea** (**ringworm**), **warts** and **cancerous tumors — treat no more than 3 warts or small areas at one time, applying the lotion no more than 2-3 times a day.**

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Makes good ground cover in areas where its invasive habit is not a problem.

Other

Famine food: Boil leaves with clean earth, leave mixture overnight and wash thoroughly before eating.

German Chamomile

(Blue Chamomile, Chamomile, Chamomilla, Hungarian Chamomile, Matricaria, Mu Ju, Scented Chamomile, Scented Mayweed, Sweet False Chamomile, True Chamomile or Wild Chamomile)

Tripleurospermum inodorum syn*. Matricaria chamomilla, M. courrantiana, M. recutita* and *Chamomilla recutita, Asteraceae*

Hardy annual. 50cm (18") x 25cm (9"), Full sun, any well drained soil. Tolerates poor soil and saline soil.

Restricted as a noxious weed in Colorado, USA.

Sow direct and thin to prevent overcrowding.

Cut entire flower stalks early in the morning when fully open and completely dry. Discard all but 2 inches of stem and hang in bunches to dry.

German chamomile is not closely related to Roman chamomile, although they are in the same botanical family.

German chamomile is considered to be safe for young children, even babies, but is **not safe for pregnant women**. **Frequent use over a long period or too high dose may cause vomiting or worsen the symptoms it is intended to cure.**

Standard infusion: 1 tbsp fresh or dried flowers/250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

German chamomile has **antiseptic** and **anti-inflammatory** properties and can be used as a **pain reliever**. It's also a **vasodilator**, which means it widens the blood vessels, thus **lowering blood pressure**. Use a standard infusion for **disorders of the digestive system**, ranging from **indigestion**, **colic** and **flatulence** to **irritable bowel syndrome**, **Crohn's disease**, **peptic ulcers** and **hiatus hernia**. It's also used for its **sedative** effect, particularly useful in **teething infants**.

A mouthful of the standard infusion held in the mouth will help a **toothache**.

A cooled infusion can also be used as a wash for **external ulcers**, **wounds**, **sunburn** and **hemorrhoids** (**"piles"**).

You can also treat hemorrhoids by sitting in a bath of hot water with the addition of an infusion made with 450g (1 lb) of flowers to 4.5 litres (5 US quarts, 8 UK pints) of boiling water, infused for 10 minutes. This quantity is for a full sized bath, adjust accordingly if you want to use it as a **footbath** to treat **tired, sweaty feet**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

German chamomile essential oil is readily available. **NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women.** Causes drowsiness. **Don't use while driving.** Used for **acne**, **allergies**, **arthritis**, **boils**, **burns**, **chilblains**, **dermatitis**, **earache**, **eczema**, **inflammation**, **inflammatory diseases**, **insomnia**, **menstrual problems**, **migraine**, **muscle pain**, **nervous tension**, **psoriasis**, **sprains**, **toothache** and **small wounds**.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.
Insect repellent.
Treatment plant: Standard infusion as liquid feed and general plant tonic.

Common Chickweed

(Chickenwort, Craches, Fan Lu, Maruns or Winterweed)

Stellaria media syn. *Alsine media, Caryophyllaceae*

Hardy annual. 10cm (4") x 50cm (20"), Full sun or semi-shade, any moist soil. Tolerates heavy clay.

It's fairly unlikely you'll need to deliberately grow this plant, and probably best you don't as it hosts some nasties, including wireworm. It's found all over the world, flowers and sets seeds all year round except when actually covered by snow, and all in all it's what we all want to be — a survivor. However, if for some reason you wish to cultivate it, give it good fertile soil for the best crop of leaves. In poor soil, it flowers and sets seed very quickly.

You can pick leaves for the kitchen all year round; the main crop should be taken between May and July and may be dried for later use.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women. Excess intake may cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried whole herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Decoction: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried whole herb to 1 litre (4 US cups, 32 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day. Do not exceed the stated dose.

Use a standard infusion to treat **chest complaints** and as a **digestive aid**. Externally, it can be used as a lotion extremely effective against **itchiness** or added to bath water for **rheumatic conditions** and **skin**.

Use a decoction as a **post-partum detox**, a **tonic for the circulatory system**, to **promote menstruation** (**emmenagogue**), **increase lactation** in nursing mothers (**galactagogue**), and to treat **constipation**, **kidney disorders** and **TB**. Externally, it can be used to treat **rheumatic pain**, **external ulcers**, **cuts and grazes**.

The juice extracted from chickweed can be used as an **eyewash**.

As a poultice it can be used to treat **broken capillaries** and **roseola**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be cooked like spinach or used in small quantities in salads.

In the Garden

Attractive to wildlife.

(European) Coltsfoot

(Butterbur, Coughwort, Kuan Dong or Winter Heliotrope)

Tussilago farfara syn. *Cineraria farfara, Farfara radiata, T. alpestris* and *T. umbertina, Asteraceae*

Hardy perennial. 25cm (10") x 1m (3'), Full sun or partial shade, moist, neutral to alkaline soil.

Invasive. Keep restricted or it will overtake your garden. Banned in some countries and **restricted in several US states** (including AL, CT, MA and OR) as a noxious weed.

Propagate by seed sown in Spring or by division in Spring or Fall.

Pick full grown leaves in June and July, fully open flowers as available between February and April and dig roots in Fall. All can be used fresh or dried. Cut whole above ground plants as required for dye.

Not related to US plants called coltsfoot (mostly *Petasites sp*).

NB: Coltsfoot is not suitable for pregnant or nursing women, or children under the age of 6. In any case, treatment should be continued

for **a maximum of 4-6 weeks**, after which either use other remedies or consult a physician. Don't use the flowers internally except under the supervision of a qualified herbalist.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) leaves only to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Decoction: 15g (½ ounce) fresh or dried root to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Special tea: 1 tsp of a mixture containing 1 part coltsfoot, 1 part uva ursi and 2 parts great mullein by volume to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water (recommended by Dr Elise Wright of AllExperts.com).
Dosage (special tea): 2 cups a day.
(other): Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day. Do not continue treatment for more than 6 weeks.

Use a standard infusion for **coughs** and other **respiratory conditions** including **asthma**, **chronic emphysema** and **silicosis**, to **boost the immune system** and for **reducing fevers**.

A decoction can be used as a **general tonic** and to **induce sweating**.

A poultice of flowers can be used to treat **skin conditions** including **bites**, **eczema**, **inflammation**, **sores** and **external ulcers**.

Use the special tea for **lung repair**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to bees.

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be used raw in salads, in soup or as a vegetable. Flowers can be used to make wine.

Other

An ingredient in herbal tobacco. Dye for wool using alum as mordant gives yellow-green, and using copperas gives green.

Comfrey

(Blackwort, Consound, Healingherb, Knitbone or Slippery-root)

Symphytum officinale syn. *S. peregrinum* and *S. uliginosum, Boraginaceae*

Hardy perennial. 60-120cm (2-4') x 30-60cm (1-2'), Full sun or partial shade, moist to wet soil. (Flower color varies.)

Invasive and difficult to eradicate once established. **Restricted in certain countries.**

For use as garden fertilizer, the Bocking 14 strain developed by the Henry Doubleday Research Association is best, available only as root cuttings. Plant 1m (3') apart. For other purposes, may be propagated from seed sown in Spring and transplanted to final position in Fall.

Cut leaves before flowering and use fresh, or dried for medicinal use. Cut down once the first year, up to 3 times a year in following years. Lift roots in Fall and dry for medicinal use.

NB: Not suitable for use either internally or externally by pregnant or breastfeeding women, children, the elderly or anybody suffering from disorders of the liver. The sale of comfrey-containing products for internal use is banned in many countries, including the US, the UK, Australia, Canada and Germany.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/1 ounce dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water. Sweeten with honey.
Decoction: 4 tsp chopped root to 500ml (2 US cups,16 fl oz) water. Sweeten with honey.
Dosage: **For external use only.** Do not use on broken skin. Do not use for more than 10 days at a time or for more than 4-6 weeks per year.

Use the infusion or decoction externally for **cuts and grazes**, **sores** and **insect bites**.

You can also use a poultice for **wounds**, **sores** and **insect bites**.

Adding the chopped root to your bath water will help to keep a **youthful complexion**.

Comfrey ointment is used for **bruises**, **muscle pain** and **osteoarthritis**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to bees.
Treatment plant: Fertilizer to promote flowering/fruiting especially useful for tomatoes. Either use a mulch of chopped leaves or, preferably, make fertilizer by allowing to rot in a container and using the resulting liquid diluted with water at a ratio of 1 part comfrey liquid to 3 parts water. The variety "Bocking 14" is usually recommended for this purpose.

White Deadnettle

(Archangel, Honey Flower, Bee Nettle, Snowflake, Blind Nettle, Nettle Flowers, Stingless Nettle, White Archangel or White Nettle)

Lamium album, Lamiaceae

Hardy perennial. 15-60cm (6-24") x 60-90cm (2-3'), Full sun or partial shade, moist, well-drained soil.

Propagate by seed sown in Spring or Fall, by division or cuttings in Spring.

For herbal use, gather flowering tops during the Summer.

Standard infusion: 2 tsp whole plant/250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.
Dosage: 1-1½ cups a day.

White dead nettle is **astringent** and **soothing** and can be used as a **uterine tonic** to stop **bleeding after childbirth** and **bleeding between periods**, for **heavy or painful periods**, and to treat **prostatitis**, **kidney and bladder disorders**, **diarrhea**, **insomnia** and **vaginal discharge**.

It can also be used as a douche to treat **vaginal discharge from recurring BV** which is not responding to conventional treatment, and **NB: Only use at low pressure in a vaginal douche.**

A compress can be used externally to treat **hemorrhoids** (**piles**) and **varicose veins**.

Used in homeopathy to treat **bladder and kidney disorders** and to **induce menstruation** (**emmenagogue**).

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The young leaves can be used in salad. The flowers make a pleasant herbal tea.

In the Garden

Attractive to bees.
Pest deterrent: potato bugs.
Can be used as ground cover at the edge of wooded areas.

Curled Dock

(Curly Dock, Garden Patience, Narrow Dock, Narrow Leaved Dock, Rumex, Sour Dock, Yellow Dock or Zhou Ye Suan Mo)

Rumex crispus, Polygonaceae

Hardy perennial. 60cm (2') x 30cm (1'), Full sun or semi-shade, any moist soil.

Closely related to sorrel (also sometimes called narrow-leaved dock), French sorrel and sheep's sorrel and the broad-leaved dock which most people remember from childhood as an instant treatment for nettle stings.

Restricted as a noxious weed in many US states.

Curled dock is easy enough to grow, but I advise against it, particularly if you're in an agricultural area (it hosts crop diseases). If you live in a town you might perhaps grow it at the back of the shed or somewhere else out

of sight because once established — like many other taprooted weeds — it will be difficult to eliminate. But there's really no need...

You'll find it growing on any wild area, so you can gather what you require there. As it's a widespread (some might say pernicious) weed, it's possible that it will have been dosed with weedkiller, but if it's growing amongst lots of other healthy looking weeds, I personally would assume that it is safe.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Decoction: 30g (1 oz) root to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

The decoction is used as a **laxative**.

A poultice of crushed root can be used to draw **boils**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other

In the Garden

Attractive to wildlife.

Sweet Flag

(Calamus, Calamus Root, Flag Root, Muskrat Root, Myrtle Flag, Rat Root, Sweet Calamus, Sweet Calomel, Sweetroot, Sweet Rush or Sweet Sedge)

Acorus calamus, Acoraceae

Hardy perennial. 1m (3'), Full sun or semi-shade, in water or any wet soil.

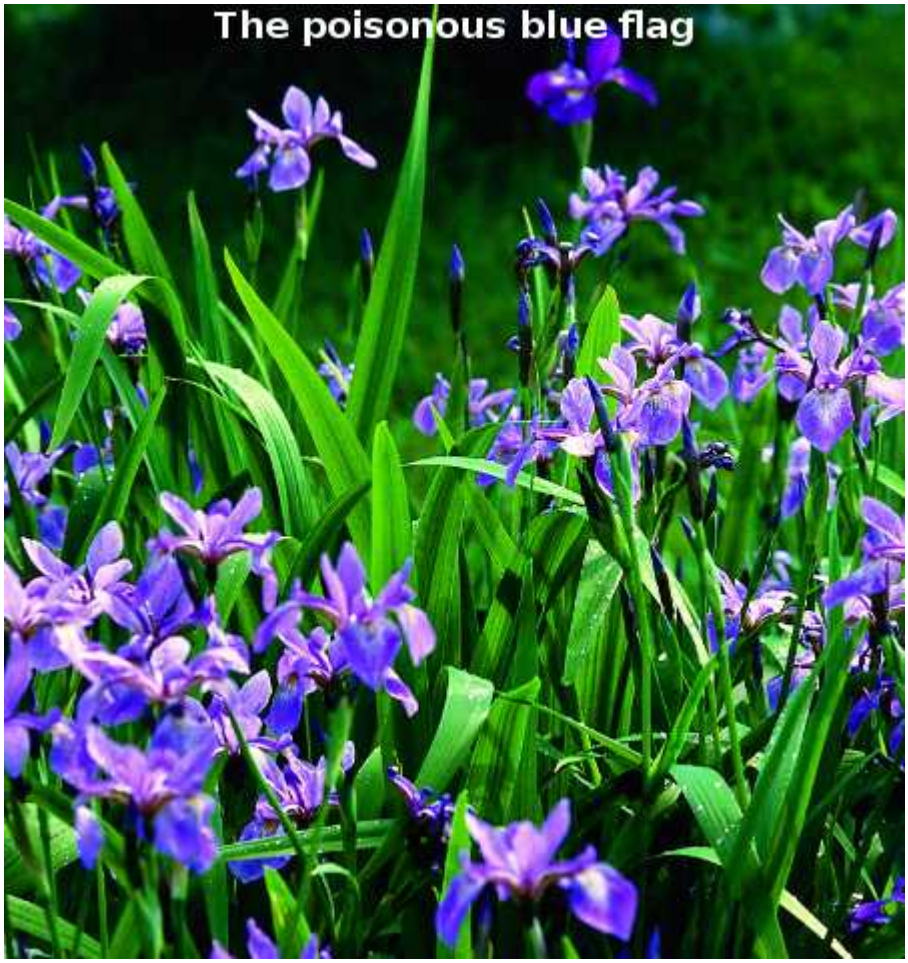
Not related to the blue flag, bog myrtle, common myrtle, lemon myrtle, allspice (sometimes called myrtle pepper) or common sedge.

Sweet flag can be propagated from seed, which should be surface sown onto moist or wet soil as soon as the seeds are available and not allowed to dry out. Once plants are big enough to handle they can be moved to a sheltered area, but must be kept moist or even wet at all times until they are transplanted to their final position, on the edge or in the margins of a pond, where the soil is always moist or even flooded.

The American poet Walt Whitman wrote 39 poems about the sweet flag, known as the Calamus poems, in his book Leaves of Grass, and it was also a favorite of the naturalist Henry David Thoreau.

Sweet flag is the favorite food of the American musk rat and perhaps because of this, as well as its use in medicine, native Americans planted it everywhere they went. It's now found across North America in water close to former native American settlements, camping areas and trails.

Take care not to confuse this plant with the poisonous blue flag (sometimes called poison flag), a species of Iris which grows in the same habitat. If either plant is in flower, this is easy to achieve, but otherwise you can tell them apart by fragrance. Sweet flag has a pleasant, sweet fragrance, whereas blue flag does not.



If there is any doubt, it is wise not to harvest the plant, as an error may prove fatal. However, if you are able to grow sweet flag, this difficulty can be avoided (so long as you don't also grow its poisonous namesake).

Acorus calamus and derivatives, as well as products containing them, were banned by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1968 for use in food or food supplements offered for sale. The reason given relates to tests done on rats fed with large quantities of an extract (beta-asarone) of the tetraploid form of the plant (found in East Asia, India and Japan), *not* found in the diploid and triploid forms which grow in Europe and North America. For this reason, the essential oil (which is a highly concentrated extract) is not recommended for medicinal use, because it may be dangerous (even though beta-asarone is not found in European and North American plants). It's possible (probable?) that the real reason for this ban is the plant's hallucinogenic properties.

There is no regulation prohibiting personal use of sweet flag in the US. There may be regulations in other countries, so it is best to check the law in the country where you live.

Sow seed in a pot and stand in about an inch or so of water in a cold frame as soon as it is ripe. Pot up when big enough to handle, still standing the pots in water. Plant out in mid-late Spring. Can also be propagated by division during the growing season planted direct into its permanent position.

The part used in herbal medicine is the rhizome (an underground stem, often mistakenly called a root), which should be harvested in late Fall or early Spring when plants are no more than 3 years old and used immediately or dried for later use.

Don't store dried roots for more than a few months, as they deteriorate quickly.

NB: Not suitable for use during pregnancy. May cause miscarriage.

If you've never used sweet flag before, start with a low dose. If this does not work, increase the dose but don't overdo it. **Taking too large a dose can cause nausea, vomiting and hallucinations.** Do not use sweet flag for a long period. Alternate with other remedies for longstanding conditions.

Standard infusion: 2 tsp fresh or dried rhizome to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.
Decoction: 1 tbsp fresh or dried rhizome to 240ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.
Herbal bath: add 450gm (1lb) of dried rhizome to 5 litres (5 US quarts, 1 UK gallon) cold water, bring to a boil and turn off heat, steep for 5 minutes, strain off herb and throw away. Add liquid to bath water. Check

bath temperature before use.
Standard dosage and delivery method: a piece of fresh root about 5cm (2 inches) long, chewed and discarded.

The most common way of using sweet flag is by chewing it; chew without swallowing until you feel you've had enough (this may sound a bit hit and miss, but isn't unusual with folk remedies, which are generally milder than conventional medicine). Try not to swallow the chewed root, as it may cause a stomach upset. Dispose of the chewed root in the trash.

Sweet flag is a **stimulant** and mild **tonic**, **appetite stimulant** - recommended for **anorexia nervosa**, **promotes perspiration**, **menstruation** and the flow of **mucus** and **saliva**, **lowers fevers and blood pressure**. It can be used to treat **flatulence** ("**gas**" or "**wind**"), **bloating** and **colic**, **tickly coughs**, **sinusitis**, **neuralgia**, **epilepsy** and **memory loss** and to destroy **intestinal parasites**. It's also a remedy for digestive disorders; small doses **reduce stomach acidity**; larger doses **increase stomach secretions**.

Chew the rhizome to treat **panic and anxiety attacks** or for **shock**, to relieve pain from **toothache**, **sore gums** and **sore throat** and to **kill the taste for tobacco** (may induce nausea).

It is also used externally to treat **skin eruptions**, **rheumatic pains** and **neuralgia**.

Arabic, Ancient Roman and traditional European herbals recommend it as an **aphrodisiac** which increases sexual desire. The traditional treatment for this purpose is a herbal bath.

In traditional Chinese medicine it is used to treat **deafness**, **dizziness** and **epilepsy**.

In Ayurvedic medicine it is valued as a rejuvenator for the **brain and nervous system**, and as a remedy for **digestive disorders**.

The Dakotas used it to treat **diabetes**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

The essential oil is usually labelled Calamus. **NB: It is carcinogenic. Do Not Use under any circumstances.** It is used by perfumery and pharmaceutical companies.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be used to flavor custard (by immersion in the milk while it is heating, removed before serving), young leaves can be cooked and peeled stems used raw in salad. Young flowers are sweet, and can also be eaten uncooked.

Common Fumitory

(Earth Smoke, Hedge Fumitory and Wax Dolls)

Fumaria officinalis, Papaveraceae

Hardy annual. 30cm (1') x 30cm (1'), Full sun or semi-shade, any moist light to medium soil. Flower color can range from yellowish white to reddish purple, but all have a distinctive reddish black spot at the tip.

Sow seed direct anywhere except in full shade in early or late Spring or Fall. As it self-seeds readily you shouldn't need to sow it again. It thrives on neglect - giving it too much attention can be counter-productive.

The whole herb above ground is the part used medicinally. It should be gathered when flowering begins in Summer and may be dried for later use. Flowers can be gathered in Summer for use in dying.

The name fumitory is believed to be a corruption of the old latin name *fumus terrae* which means smoke of the earth. According to Pliny (a Roman) and Dioscorides (an ancient Greek) it was called this because the juice was so sharp it made your eyes water - like smoke getting in your eyes.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant or nursing women, anyone with glaucoma, epilepsy or other fitting disorders, or anyone taking conventional medical treatment for high blood pressure (hypertension).

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Decoction: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 1 litre (4 US cups, 32 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses. Do not exceed the stated dose (may cause sedation, diarrhea and stomach ache).

According to David Conway in *The Magic of Herbs*, fumitory is traditionally infused in wine, though I don't advise this, especially if you're using it to treat liver conditions.

The standard infusion is **anti-inflammatory** and is used internally as a **liver tonic**, **mild diuretic**, **gall bladder stimulant**, **blood cleanser**, **laxative**, for **skin conditions** such as **dermatitis**, **eczema**, **acne** and to treat **internal obstructions**. Externally it can be used for **skin conditions**.

A decoction can be used externally to treat **cradle cap** (**milk crust**) in babies.

The juice is sometimes mixed with that of another plant, sorrel, and used to treat **itchy skin** and **tinea** (**ringworm**).

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

Other

Yellow dye from flowers. Fumitory oil is used in the food industry as a bactericide.

European Goldenrod

(Aaron's Rod or Goldenrod)

Solidago virgaurea, Asteraceae

Hardy perennial. 80cm (32") x 45-60cm (18-24"), Full sun or partial shade, well drained, moisture retaining soil.

Invasive.

Propagate by seed sown in Spring or by division in Spring or Fall. Top dress every Spring with fish, blood and bone or organic Growmore, working the dressing into the top layer of soil.

Harvest leaves and flowering tops for medicinal use in Summer before the flowers open completely. Harvest flowers for dye from July to October. Pull up whole plants for dye as required.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant and breast feeding women or patients with chronic kidney disease. May cause mild allergic

reactions in some people.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

The standard infusion is **anti-inflammatory** and used for **gastro-enteritis in children**, **broken capillaries**, **urinary tract disorders** including **cystitis**, **nephritis**, **kidney stones**, **urinary tract infections**, **chronic catarrh**, **skin diseases**, **influenza** and **whooping cough**.

Externally, it is used to **stop bleeding** and treat **cuts and grazes**, as a douche for **thrush** (***Candida***) and mouthwash for **oral thrush**.

The seed can be chewed after meals to fight **flatulence** ("**gas**" or "**wind**").

It is used in homeopathy to treat **kidney and bladder disorders**, **rheumatism** and **arthritis**.

Approved in Germany for **UTIs**, **kidney and bladder stones**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Goldenrod essential oil is not made from the plant discussed here, but from *Solidago canadensis*, the American goldenrod.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to bees, butterflies and hoverflies.
Predator host: hoverflies, lacewings, ladybirds, ichneumon flies.

Other

Pot pourri (color).

Flowers and whole plants can be used for dying: alum mordant gives yellow to yellowish-tan, chrome mordant gives gold.

Goosegrass

(Catchweed Bedstraw, Cleavers, Cleaverwort, Clivers, Coachweed, Gosling Weed, Hedge-Burs, Loveman, Robin-Run-The-Hedge, Stickaback, Stickyleaf, Stickyweed, Sticky Willy or Sweethearts)

Galium aparine, Rubiaceae

Hardy annual. 1.2m (4') x 3m (10'), Full sun to full shade, any soil.

Closely related to lady's bedstraw and sweet woodruff.

It is quite definitely a weed and many of the names given to this plant refer to its ability to stick fast to your legs or whatever other portion of your anatomy comes into contact with it — leading to the evident joy that the young and not-so-young gain from throwing it at each other! This is its tactic for spreading from places where it's already well-established to other areas. I would advise against trying to cultivate it, as it will just take over. You won't have any difficulty sourcing plenty of material — just avoid gathering it in areas close to roads, of course. The correct time for this is

May or June, as the plant comes into flower, and you can dry it for later use.

Note: Sensitive people may find that contact with the juice causes dermatitis.

Pregnancy-safe.

Standard infusion: 2 handfuls of freshly chopped herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.
Salve: mix freshly squeezed juice with butter.

The standard infusion is used internally to treat **dandruff** and other types of **seborrhea**, **eczema**, **psoriasis**, **skin cancer**, **cystitis**, **Epstein-Barr virus** (**glandular fever**), **hepatitis**, **ME** and **tonsillitis**. It's also useful as a **diuretic** and to **reduce fevers**. It is also used externally to treat **seborrhea**, **eczema**, **psoriasis** and **skin cancer**.

As a poultice it is used to treat **cuts and grazes**, **external ulcers** and other **skin problems**.

The salve is also used to treat **skin conditions**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The young shoots can be used as a potherb, the seeds as a coffee substitute, and the whole dried plant as a tea substitute. A thick (3 to 4 inch) layer of the herb in a sieve can be used to filter liquids

Other

A red dye can be made from the roots. If you get tar on your skin, rubbing it with fresh herb will remove it.

Wild Lettuce

(Bitter Lettuce or Great Lettuce)

Lactuca virosa syn. *L. cornigera* and *L. livida, Asteraceae*

Hardy annual/biennial. 3m (6'), Full sun or semi-shade, moist light to medium soil.

Sow seed direct in Spring or Fall and barely cover.

Collect sap by cutting the head off the plant and scraping off the black stuff which collects several times a day. Leaves and flowers can be collected as required.

NB: Wild lettuce should never be used without professional supervision. Excess doses may cause death.

The sap contains lactucarium, which is like a mild and non-addictive opium and is used as a **painkiller**, **antispasmodic**, **diuretic** and to **induce sleep**. However, as the plant also contains hyoscyamine, a powerful parasympathetic nervous system depressant, it should never be used without professional supervision.

For professional use only: Lactucarium or an infusion of leaves is taken to treat **anxiety**, **dry coughs** and **whooping cough**, **hyperactivity in children**, **insomnia**, **neuroses** and for **pain relief**.

Fresh sap can be used externally to treat **warts**.

In homeopathy it is used to treat **chronic catarrh**, **coughs**, **flatulence** ("**gas**" or "**wind**"), **swollen liver** and **urinary tract problems**.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

An oil extracted from the seeds can be used for cooking.

Great Mullein

(Aaron's Road, Blanketweed, Flannelleaf, Flannelplant, Grey Mullein, Hag Taper, Jupiter's Staff, Mao Rui Hua, Torches, Velvet Dock, Velvetplant, White Mullein or Wild Tobacco)

Verbascum thapsus, Scrophulariaceae

Hardy perennial. 2m (6') x 1m (3'), Full sun, light, well drained to dry soil.

Restricted as a noxious weed in Colorado and Hawaii, USA and certain other countries.

Propagate by sowing seed in Fall or by root cuttings in Winter. Self-seeds freely.

Collect leaves and flowers in Summer and whole plants when flowering for medicinal and domestic use. All parts may be dried. The flowers may also

be frozen or used fresh. Collect above ground parts for dye when flowering. Plants for use in dying may be dried for later use.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women. The hairs on the leaves are irritant. **It's important than any preparations for internal use are strained carefully to remove them before use.**

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water. Strain carefully before use.
Decoction of roots: 15g (½ ounce) fresh or dried root to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Decoction of seeds: 15g (½ ounce) seeds to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

A standard infusion is taken internally for **diarrhea** and for **chest complaints** including **tracheitis** and **bronchitis**.

Use a poultice of leaves for **hemorrhoids** ("**piles**"), **tumors**, **ulcers**, **cuts and grazes**. A poultice of seeds and leaves can be used to draw **splinters**.

A decoction of the roots is used for **toothache** and to relieve **cramp** and **convulsions**. A decoction of the seeds is used externally on **chilblains** and **chapped skin**.

An oil maceration of the flowers is bactericidal and can be used externally to treat **hemorrhoids** and other inflammations of the mucous membranes.

Rough warts (but not smooth warts) can be removed by rubbing them with a mixture of the juice and powdered dried root.

In homeopathy it is used to treat "long-standing **headaches** accompanied with oppression of the ear".

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

The essential oil is usually labelled Mullein. Check to be sure that the herb in question is *Verbascum thapsus*, as other herbs are sometimes used. Mullein essential oil is **analgesic**, **anti-inflammatory**, **antiseptic**, **disinfectant**, **diuretic** and can also be used to treat **stress**.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Tea can be made from either the leaves (strain carefully, see note above) or the flowers, the latter being sweeter.

Other

Everlasting.
Yellow, green or brown dye, depending on mordant.
Blonde hair color from flowers.
The down from leaves and stems can be used as tinder for making fires, candle wicks and insulation for shoes.
Flowering stems make good torches if dipped in wax.

Common Nettle

(California Nettle, European Nettle, Giant Nettle, Stinging Nettle or Yi Zhu Qian Ma)

Urtica dioica syn. *U. gracilis, U. holosericea* and *U. lyallii, Urticaceae*

Hardy perennial. 1.5m (5'), Full sun or semi-shade, moist, nitrogen-rich soil.

Invasive.

You should have no trouble growing this plant, only in keeping it in check. It likes rich soil, and is used an indicator for good growing land. Sow direct somewhere out of sight (as it is not generally considered attractive), or divide existing stock in Spring. Cut to the ground in Summer for a second crop. Control the spread to prevent invasion by pulling up dormant rhizomes.

Cut whole plants as required for dye, medicinal or culinary use.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women. Avoid large doses while breastfeeding.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion as a treatment for **heavy periods**, **arthritis**, **rheumatism** and **hemorrhoids** (**piles**). It can also be used externally as a rub for **neuralgia**, **sciatica** and **arthritis**, and to treat **eczema** and **dandruff**.

A decoction is used to treat an **enlarged prostate**.

Being beaten with nettles is a remedy that goes back to the Romans for **rheumatism** and similar conditions.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Nettle essential oil is toxic. Do not use under any circumstances.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The young leaves are used as spinach substitute and to make soup. Do not use raw.

In the Garden

Butterfly food plant.
Predator host: many beneficial insects.
Treatment plant: various pests and diseases, aphids, celery rust.

Other

When used with alum as mordant, nettles will dye wool to a greenish-yellow.

Wild Onion

(Angled Onion, Three-Corner Garlic, Three-Corner Leek, Triquetrous Garlic or Triquetrous Leek)

Allium triquetrum, Amarylladaceae

Half hardy bulb. 40cm (16"), Full sun to full shade, moist light to medium soil. Unlikely to be eaten by deer.

Plant deeply, preferably in moist soil. As it tolerates shade, it is an ideal plant for a woodland area. Provide a good layer of mulch as protection in cold areas before the first frost, or grow in containers that can be moved indoors. May not survive outdoors in hard winters. If allowed to seed, these may be distributed around the garden by ants (which collect them for their oil).

Pick leaves from Fall to Spring for culinary use. Pick flowers as required for the kitchen. Harvest bulbs in Summer after the top growth has died down. Can be stored for 6 months plus.

Pregnancy safe.

One of the easiest herbs to use: just add it to your diet, and you will receive the benefits in the form of **lower cholesterol** and an improvement in **circulation** and **digestion**.

Aromatherapy

Not used. The related onion essential oil (*Allium cepa*) should only be used by professional aromatherapists.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.
Companion plant: beet, carrots, chamomile and roses.
Antagonistic plant: alfalfa, beans, peas and other legumes.

In the Kitchen

The small bulbs can be used raw or cooked. Young leaves raw in salad, older leaves cooked as a leek substitute or used as flavoring. Raw flowers are an unusual addition to salads.

American Pennyroyal

(American False Pennyroyal, Mock Pennyroyal, Mosquito Plant, Squaw Balm, Squawmint, Stinking Balm or Tickweed)

Hedeoma pulegioides syn*. Cunila pulegioides, Melissa pulegioides* and *Ziziphora pulegioides*

Hardy annual. 30cm (1') x 20cm (8"), Full sun or semi-shade, well drained acid or neutral soil.

Not related to vervain (sometimes called mosquito plant) or European pennyroyal.

It bears clusters of small lavender to purplish flowers between June and October.

NB: American pennyroyal is not suitable for use by pregnant women. Avoid using large quantities of the herb, as this may also be toxic.

As American pennyroyal is quite dangerous and has no uses which cannot be duplicated by other safer herbs, my advice would be to avoid using it.

Standard infusion: 1 tsp of herb to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.
Dosage: 1 cup a day.

The standard infusion can be used externally to treat **rashes**, **itching skin** and other **skin conditions**.

Rub skin with fresh plant to **deter ticks**.

Used by native Americans to treat **menstrual pain**, and for **headache**. Nineteenth century settlers used it to **induce menstruation**, and also to promote perspiration in the early stages of a **cold**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: The essential oil is toxic and should not be used internally except under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner. Even externally, the oil can cause dermatitis.

Other Uses

Other

Insect repellent.

Field Poppy

(Common Poppy, Corn Poppy, Flanders Poppy, Red Poppy, Shirley Poppy or Yu Mei Ren)

Papaver rhoeas, Papaveraceae

Hardy perennial. 20-90cm (8-36") x 10-45cm (4-18"), Full sun, well drained soil.

Closely related to the opium poppy, which is often grown as an ornamental.

Sow seed in Spring, do not cover. You will probably only need to sow the first year, as thereafter you will be pulling excess seedlings up. The poppy often appears spontaneously on disturbed ground, as the seeds require light to germinate and lie dormant until brought to the surface. Many ornamental varieties are offered for sale, but to avoid an invasion, seed heads should be ruthlessly removed before they disperse their seeds.

Collect petals on a dry day as flowers open and use immediately, dry or make into syrup for later use. Collect seeds and dry for use whole or

ground.

Petal infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried petals to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Leaf and seed infusion: as petal infusion, substituting leaves and seeds for petals.
Dosage: up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women. Although this plant is non-addictive, it should only be used under the supervision of a qualified herbalist, in particular the latex from the seedpods.

A petal infusion is used internally for **catarrh**, **hay fever**, **asthma** and **coughs**, **insomnia**, **IBS**, **jaundice** and **light pain relief**. Externally it can be used as a gargle for **sore throat**.

A leaf and seed infusion can be used as a **general tonic**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used. Although you may find poppy seed oil offered for sale, this is obtained from the opium poppy, not the field poppy.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.

In the Kitchen

Seeds raw or cooked in bread, cakes etc. Leaves harvested before flowerbuds have formed can be used like spinach or added to the salad bowl. Red food dye from petals.

Other

Dye plant. Petals in pot pourri (color).

Herb Robert

(Dragons Blood, Mountain Geranium, Red Robin, Robert Geranium, Storkbill or Wild Cranesbill)

Geranium robertianum syn. *G. purpureum* and *Robertiella robertiana, Geraniaceae*

Hardy annual/biennial. 40cm (15"), Full sun or semi-shade, any well drained soil.

Restricted as a noxious weed in Washington, USA.

Closely related to the spotted cranesbill and less closely to the rose geranium, rose scented geranium and apple geranium.

Easy to propagate — just sow the seeds where you want the plants to appear, and thin as necessary.

Gather whole plants including roots for dying or top parts for medicinal use any time from June to October and use fresh or dry for later use.

Pregnancy-safe in small quantities.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

This can be used to **increase fertility** in both sexes, treat **diarrhea**, **stomach problems**, **kidney problems** and **gout**, and externally as a mouthwash for **inflammations of the mouth**, and diluted half and half as an **eyewash**.

A poultice of fresh leaves can be used for persistent **skin problems**, **boils** and also to treat painful **swollen breasts**.

If you cut yourself while gardening, a crushed leaf will **stop the bleeding**. Rubbing the leaves on your skin will also **repel mosquitoes**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.
Pest repellent: mosquitoes, deer and rabbits.

Other

Brown dye from whole plant.

Selfheal

(Allheal, Heal-all or Common Selfheal)

Prunella vulgaris, Lamiaceae

Hardy perennial. 50cm (20"), Full sun or light shade, moist well drained soil.

Sow in trays from April to June, prick out at 5cm (2") height. Transplant September to October. Divide existing stock in Spring or Fall.

Cut plants in Summer when flowering and dry. Cut flower spikes in late Fall and dry.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion to treat **infections**, **diarrhea**, and also **internal parasites**. It can also be used externally for **cold sores** and **genital**

herpes and as a **gargle** for soreness of the **mouth**, **gums and throat**, as a wash for **open wounds**, **boils**, **hemorrhoids** ("**piles**") and may also be helpful in treating **scabies**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be used raw or cooked in salads, soups, stews etc (wash first to remove tannin).

Other

Olive green dye from leaves.

Thoroughwort

(Common Boneset or Thoroughwax)

Eupatorium perfoliatum syn. *Cunigunda perfoliata, E. chapmanii, E. connatum* and *E. salviifolium, Asteraceae*

Hardy annual. 60-150cm (2-5') x 30-100cm (1-3'), Full sun or partial shade, moist soil.

Sow seed under cover in Spring, barely cover seed. Prick out into individual pots and grow on. Transplant to permanent position in Summer. Can also be propagated by division in Spring or Fall.

Cut whole plants when in bud and use fresh or dried.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g (1 ounce) dried leaves and flowers to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses. Do not exceed the stated dose.

Use a standard infusion for **colds and flu**, other **feverish illnesses** and **coughs**. In large amounts it is laxative and emetic (in other words it causes vomiting), so don't overdo it.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Indian Tobacco

(Asthma Weed, Lobelia or Pukeweed)

Lobelia inflata syn. *Dortmannia inflata, Lobelia michauxii, Rapuntium inflatum* and *R. michauxii, Campanulaceae*

Hardy annual. 60cm (2') x 30cm (1'), Full shade or semi-shade, rich moist soil. Tolerates heavy clay.

Closely related to cardinal flower, water lobelia, pale spike and Devil's tobacco (poisonous, see note below).

Sow Fall direct (Spring sowings will probably bolt), do not cover seed. Water carefully and thin as required.

Devil's tobacco, *Lobelia tupa*, is so poisonous that people have been known to get sick just by smelling it. So that you don't get mixed up and

use it by mistake, I'm putting a picture of it here.

NB: Indian tobacco should not be used except on the advice and under the supervision of a qualified herbalist. Never exceed the dose recommended by your herbal practitioner.

It is **antispasmodic** and a **respiratory stimulant**, used as an aid to **smoking cessation** and for **coughs**, **asthma**, **chronic bronchitis**, **whooping cough** and **pleurisy**.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental. Bedding plant.

Other

A source of alpha-Lobeline, used for manufacturing smoking cessation products.

Blue Vervain

(American Blue Vervain, American Vervain, False Vervain, Indian Hyssop, Purvain, Simpler's Joy, Swamp Verbena, Traveler's Joy, Vervain or Wild Hyssop)

Verbena hastata, Verbenaceae

Hardy perennial. 1.5m (5') x 60cm (2'), Full sun or semi-shade, moist well drained soil.

Closely related to the common (European) vervain, which is also sometimes called blue vervain. It is not closely related to lemon verbena and not related at all to hyssop.

Sow seed in early Spring under cover, barely cover seed. Prick out into individual pots when large enough to handle, plant out in Summer. Can also be propagated by division in Spring or basal cuttings in early summer,

potted up and kept in light shade until planted out in Summer or the following Spring.

Lift roots in Fall. Pick flowers from July to August and dry.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women.

Standard infusion: 2 tbsp chopped root to 500 ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage (tonic): 2-3 tsp up to 6 times a day. *(other uses):* Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day split into 3 doses.

A standard infusion is used as a **general tonic**, **tranquillizer** and **expectorant** and to treat **indigestion**, **gravel** and **internal parasites**. It can also be used to treat "periodic" diseases like **malaria** and externally for **cuts and grazes**.

Use powdered dried flowers like snuff for **nose bleeds**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be used for tea.

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Wormseed

Dysphania anthelmintica syn. *Ambrina andicola, Chenopodium ambrosioides anthelminticum* and *C. anthelminticum, Chenopodiaceae*

Hardy annual or short-lived perennial. 1m (3') x 70cm (20"), Full sun or semi-shade, any moist soil.

In areas with cold Winters, sow seed under cover in Fall, prick out and pot on, planting out after the last frost the following Spring. In its native land, you can just sow it direct.

Collect seeds when ripe in early Fall.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women. Wormseed should not be used except under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. May cause dermatitis or other allergic reactions.

Standard infusion: 15g seeds to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.
Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) split into 3 doses. Always take after food.

An infusion can be used for **colic**, **indigestion**, **internal parasites** (use other remedies for tapeworm) and **amoebic dysentery**.

Externally, it can be used for **hemorrhoids** ("**piles**").

A poultice was used in the past to treat **snake bites**.

See Volume 1 for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Wormseed essential oil is toxic and should not be used under any circumstances.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Add small quantities to beans as flavoring and to reduce flatulence ("gas" or "wind").

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Index of Remedies

Key: *pregnancy safe, **pregnancy safe (half strength), ***pregnancy safe (2nd & 3rd trimester only)

catarrh, chronic European Goldenrod, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
catarrh Field Poppy, herb
chest complaints Chickweed, herb; Great Mullein, herb
chilblains German Chamomile, essential oil; Great Mullein, herb
cholesterol, lower Wild Onion, herb*
circulatory tonic Chickweed, herb
colds and flu American Pennyroyal, herb; Thoroughwort, herb
cold sores Selfheal, herb
colic German Chamomile, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Wormseed, herb
constipation Chickweed, herb
contraceptive Lady's Bedstraw, herb
convulsions Great Mullein, herb
corns Greater Celandine, herb
cough European Coltsfoot, herb; Field Poppy, herb; Greater Celandine, herb; Indian Tobacco, herb; Thoroughwort, herb
cough, dry Wild Lettuce, herb
coughs, tickly Sweet Flag, herb
cradle cap Fumitory, herb
cramp Great Mullein, herb
Crohn's disease German Chamomile, herb
cuts and grazes Blue Vervain, herb; Chickweed, herb; Comfrey, herb; European Goldenrod, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil; German Chamomile, herb; Goosegrass, herb*; Great Mullein, herb; Lady's Bedstraw, herb
cystitis European Goldenrod, herb; Goosegrass, herb*
dandruff Goosegrass, herb*; Nettle, herb
deafness Sweet Flag, herb
dermatitis Fumitory, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil
diabetes Sweet Flag, herb
diarrhea Great Mullein, herb; Herb Robert, herb*; Selfheal, herb; Spiny Amaranth, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
digestive aid Chickweed, herb
digestive disorders German Chamomile, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
diuretic Fumitory, herb; Lady's Bedstraw, herb
dizziness Sweet Flag, herb
earache German Chamomile, essential oil
eczema European Coltsfoot, herb; Fumitory, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil; Goosegrass, herb*; Nettle, herb
emmenagogue American Pennyroyal, herb; Chickweed, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
emphysema European Coltsfoot, herb
epilepsy Sweet Flag, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
Epstein-Barr virus Goosegrass, herb*
expectorant Blue Vervain, herb; Wild Basil, herb

external ulcers European Coltsfoot, herb; German Chamomile, herb
eyewash Chickweed, herb; Herb Robert, herb*
feet, tired German Chamomile, herb
fertility, increase Herb Robert, herb*
feverish illnesses Thoroughwort, herb
fever, lower European Coltsfoot, herb; Goosegrass, herb*; Sweet Flag, herb
flatulence European Goldenrod, herb; German Chamomile, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Wild Basil, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
flu European Goldenrod, herb
galactagogue Chickweed, herb
gall bladder inflammation Greater Celandine, herb
gall bladder stimulant Fumitory, herb
gas European Goldenrod, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Wild Basil, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
gastro-enteritis in children European Goldenrod, herb
glandular fever Goosegrass, herb*
gout Greater Celandine, herb; Herb Robert, herb*
gravel Blue Vervain, herb
gums, sore Selfheal, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
hay fever Field Poppy, herb
headache American Pennyroyal, herb
headache Great Mullein, herb
hemorrhoids German Chamomile, herb; Great Mullein, herb; Nettle, herb; Selfheal, herb; White Deadnettle, herb; Wormseed, herb
hepatitis Goosegrass, herb*; Greater Celandine, herb
herpes, genital Selfheal, herb
hiatus hernia German Chamomile, herb
hyperactivity in children Wild Lettuce, herb
immune system boost European Coltsfoot, herb
indigestion Blue Vervain, herb; German Chamomile, herb; Wormseed, herb
infections Selfheal, herb
inflammation European Coltsfoot, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil
inflammatory diseases German Chamomile, essential oil
insect bites Comfrey, herb
insomnia Field Poppy, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil; White Deadnettle, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
irritable bowel syndrome Field Poppy, herb; German Chamomile, herb
itchiness Chickweed, herb
itchy skin Fumitory, with Sorrel
jaundice Field Poppy, herb; Greater Celandine, herb
kidney disorders Chickweed, herb; European Goldenrod, herb; Lady's Bedstraw, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
kidney problems Herb Robert, herb*
lactation, increase Chickweed, herb

laxative Curled Dock, herb; Fumitory, herb
liver, swollen Wild Lettuce, herb
lung repair European Coltsfoot, herb
malaria Blue Vervain, herb
ME Goosegrass, herb*
memory loss Sweet Flag, herb
menstrual problems German Chamomile, essential oil
menstruation, induce American Pennyroyal, herb; Chickweed, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
migraine German Chamomile, essential oil
milk crust Fumitory, herb
mosquito repellent Herb Robert, herb*
mouth, sore Herb Robert, herb*; Selfheal, herb
mouth ulcers Spiny Amaranth, herb
mucus, increase Sweet Flag, herb
muscle pain Comfrey, herb; German Chamomile, essential oil
nephritis European Goldenrod, herb
nervous tension German Chamomile, essential oil
neuralgia Nettle, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
neurosis Wild Lettuce, herb
nose bleed Blue Vervain, herb
obstructions, internal Fumitory, herb
osteoarthritis Comfrey, herb
painkiller Field Poppy, herb; German Chamomile, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
panic attacks Sweet Flag, herb
parasites, internal Blue Vervain, herb; Selfheal, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Wormseed, herb
periods, heavy Nettle, herb; Spiny Amaranth, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
periods, painful American Pennyroyal, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
perspiration, induce Sweet Flag, herb
piles German Chamomile, herb; Great Mullein, herb; Nettle, herb; Selfheal, herb; White Deadnettle, herb; Wormseed, herb
pleurisy Indian Tobacco, herb
post-partum detox Chickweed, herb
prostate, enlarged Nettle, herb
prostatitis White Deadnettle, herb
psoriasis German Chamomile, essential oil; Goosegrass, herb*; Greater Celandine, herb
rash American Pennyroyal, herb
respiratory conditions European Coltsfoot, herb
respiratory stimulant Indian Tobacco, herb
rheumatic pain Sweet Flag, herb
rheumatism Chickweed, herb; European Goldenrod, herb; Greater Celandine, herb; Nettle, herb
ringworm Fumitory, with Sorrel; Greater Celandine, herb

roseola Chickweed, herb
saliva, increase Sweet Flag, herb
scabies Selfheal, herb
sciatica Nettle, herb
seborrhea Goosegrass, herb*
sedative German Chamomile, herb
sexual desire, increase Sweet Flag, herb
shock Sweet Flag, herb
silicosis European Coltsfoot, herb
sinusitis Sweet Flag, herb
skin, chapped Great Mullein, herb
skin conditions American Pennyroyal, herb; Chickweed, herb; European Coltsfoot, herb; Fumitory, herb; Fumitory, herb; Goosegrass, herb*
skin diseases European Goldenrod, herb
skin eruptions Sweet Flag, herb
skin infections Lady's Bedstraw, herb
skin, itchy American Pennyroyal, herb
skin problems Herb Robert, herb*
smoking cessation Indian Tobacco, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
snake bite Wormseed, herb
sores Comfrey, herb; European Coltsfoot, herb
sore throat Spiny Amaranth, herb
splinter Great Mullein, herb
sprains German Chamomile, essential oil
stimulant Sweet Flag, herb
stomach acidity, lower Sweet Flag, herb
stomach problems Herb Robert, herb*
stomach secretion, raise Sweet Flag, herb
stones, kidney European Goldenrod, herb
sunburn German Chamomile, herb
sweating, induce European Coltsfoot, herb
TB Chickweed, herb
teething German Chamomile, herb
throat, sore Field Poppy, herb; Selfheal, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
thrush European Goldenrod, herb
thrush, oral European Goldenrod, herb
tick repellent American Pennyroyal, herb
tinea Fumitory, with Sorrel; Greater Celandine, herb
tonic, brain Sweet Flag, herb
tonic, circulation Wild Onion, herb*
tonic, digestive Wild Onion, herb*
tonic, general Blue Vervain, herb; European Coltsfoot, herb; Field Poppy, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
tonic, heart Wild Basil, herb
tonic, liver Fumitory, herb

tonic, nervous system Sweet Flag, herb
tonic, uterine White Deadnettle, herb
tonsillitis Goosegrass, herb*
toothache German Chamomile, essential oil; German Chamomile, herb; Great Mullein, herb; Sweet Flag, herb
tracheitis Great Mullein, herb
tranquillizer Blue Vervain, herb
tumor, external Great Mullein, herb
tumor, cancerous Greater Celandine, herb
ulcer, external Great Mullein, herb; Chickweed, herb; Goosegrass, herb*
ulcer, peptic German Chamomile, herb
urinary tract disorders European Goldenrod, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
vaginal discharge Spiny Amaranth, herb; White Deadnettle, herb
varicose veins White Deadnettle, herb
vasodilator German Chamomile, herb
warts Greater Celandine, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
warts, rough Great Mullein, herb
whooping cough European Goldenrod, herb; Indian Tobacco, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
wind European Goldenrod, herb; Sweet Flag, herb; Wild Basil, herb; Wild Lettuce, herb
wounds, open Selfheal, herb
wounds, slow-healing Lady's Bedstraw, herb