

Medicinal Plants in the Ferguson Forest Centre

Reference the Fall 2012 Newsletter - Article prepared by Katharine Church, Photos by Ivan Russell

Many of these plants can be consumed as a tea. To prepare the tea using fresh plants, mix 2 teaspoons of torn leaves with one cup of hot water. When using dried leaves mix one teaspoon per cup of hot water. (Note: The following information is for educational purposes only, and is not intended for self treatment of any disease! Please consult with a licensed naturopathic doctor if you wish to use herbal medicine to treat any condition)

Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*)– Drink as a tea to improve dry skin conditions such as eczema. Also beneficial for coughs and whooping cough.



Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata/ P. major*)– Crush the leaves and apply to skin to soothe stings, burns or cuts. May also be taken as a tea for dry coughs or bladder infections due to its soothing properties.

Dandelion leaves or root (*Taraxicum officinale*)– Taken as tea or eaten as a vegetable (salad, etc.). The slightly bitter flavour stimulates bile secretion, which promotes digestive functions to help the liver and gall bladder. It also acts as a mild diuretic that helps lower high blood pressure. Initial research at the University of Waterloo suggests that the root extract may be effective in treating a type of leukemia. This plant is very rich in potassium.

Horsetail – (*Equisetum arvense*) -The leaves are high in silica. Taken as a tea, it promotes prostate health and is beneficial in clearing up urinary tract infections. It is also helpful in increasing or maintaining bone density.



Wild strawberry – Taken as a tea, the leaves have an astringent property (drying) which helps clear up diarrhea. It is also used for gout. Because of its drying properties, it is also used to help dry up milk production when weaning babies off the breast. These properties are often not present in cultivated strawberries so only the leaves of wild strawberries must be used.



Yarrow – Tear off the fresh leaves and apply them to a cut to stop bleeding and promote healing. Taken as a tea, it promotes sweating to “sweat out” a cold or flu.



Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) – The root may be cooked as a vegetable or prepared as a tea. It is known to have antibacterial, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties used in the treatment of dry, flaky skin conditions such as dandruff or psoriasis.



Impatiens/ Touch-me-not – The juice from the stem of this plant is effective in the treatment of poison ivy. You can tear the stem and rub it directly on the affected area or boil the leaves and/or root to make a wash for the affected area.



Golden rod (*Solidago canadensis*)– Taken as a tea for the treatment of allergies, or sinus congestion and discharge. Soothing for bladder infections. The yellow flower is high in flavonoids, which have anti-inflammatory properties.



Colt's foot (*Tussilago farfara*)–The leaves are taken as a tea as a cough remedy.

Blackberry, wild raspberry (*Rubus spp.*) – Gargle blackberry leaf tea to help with laryngitis. Wild raspberry leaves are traditionally consumed as a tea in the third trimester of pregnancy to strengthen uterine muscles in preparation for childbirth. Most berries are beneficial in strengthening the walls of blood vessels.

Wild violet (*Viola odorata*)– Leaves are used in a tea as an anti-inflammatory to treat digestive or lung irritation.



Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)– The flowers can be boiled in a tea to treat colds and flu. The juice from the berries has been found to be effective against multiple strains of the influenza virus. It is also effective in treating the herpes virus. The Ferguson Forest Centre sells these trees in the spring.

While discussing the anti-flu properties of elderberry, Dr. Yakimovich pointed out that how we produce our food is another significant factor affecting our health. He illustrated this by explaining that the 2009 outbreak of swine flu in North America originated from industrial pig farm operations where the livestock population density was so great that the flu virus able to mutate into a form that was easily spread from pigs to humans. Understanding where and how our food is produced is an essential part of a health care strategy.