



Herb Essentials A-E: Vital Information for Anyone With Herb Garden Aspirations

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Alfalfa

Alfalfa, which is a perennial herb, has a long list of dietary and medicinal uses and research has proven that Alfalfa might lower blood levels of cholesterol and glucose. Many take Alfalfa supplements orally and it has been proven safe except in a small percentage of people where it produces lupus like symptoms.

In the seeds and sprouts of Alfalfa, amino acid L-canavanine is present and that is what is thought to cause this reaction. However, this is not present in the leaves of the Alfalfa. The whole leaf and the herb are what are rendered from the Alfalfa plant.

Since the sixth century the Chinese have used Alfalfa to relieve fluid retention and swelling. The Arabs were the first to find Alfalfa and they named it "the father of all foods." The leaves of the Alfalfa plant are very rich in minerals and nutrients, including potassium, calcium, magnesium, and carotene.

The Arabs first fed it to their horses because they believed the Alfalfa made them swift and mighty. Alfalfa has been an animal crop for over a thousand years but is also used as an herbal medicine.

Alfalfa is a good diuretic and also a good laxative. It also works well for urinary tract infections, and kidney, bladder and prostate disorders. The latest and greatest discovery of Alfalfa is the benefits that it might provide for lowering cholesterol because there are certain agents in Alfalfa that stick to cholesterol which keeps it from remaining in the blood stream. Further, it may also have a very strong relationship with lowering blood sugar levels.

When it comes to Alfalfa it is something that many people enjoy in their cuisine. It is good in salads and some people eat it as a vegetable all alone. Many people claim that eating Alfalfa is

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a big part of eating healthy. Besides wheat grass and algae, Alfalfa has the most nutritional value. It is high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and has all of the required digestive enzymes.

It is warned by avid Alfalfa lovers that you likely will not like the way that it tastes in your mouth, it may feel like it is burning the tip of your tongue and you actually might just completely dislike it however, they urge you to not give up because it is an acquired taste and you will begin to like it. The best news is that soon after eating it regularly you will find that your appetite for heavier foods will diminish.

Alfalfa is also great for reducing fevers and is very good for the blood. It contains natural fluoride and prevents tooth decay. Alfalfa makes a great tea because when the Alfalfa leaves steep in the hot water it is a source of nitrogen.

The tea is not only made for human consumption because people who grow Irises and Delphiniums just love Alfalfa tea because of the great effect that it has on the plants when used as a foliar spray. Many with a green thumb also use Alfalfa as mulch for their flower beds.

Asafoetida

Asafoetida has been also referred to as the "Food of the Gods." The main part of this plant that is used is the resin which makes up a volatile oil. The history of this herb is amazing as it was used frequently back in time by Alexander the Great for flavoring.

That was back in 4 B.C. still in early times, Asafoetida was used to treat gas and the bloating associated with it. Carrying through time the resin gum is used often for vegetarian dishes that are prepared in India. Today, it is one of the main flavorings in Worcestershire sauce.

Asafoetida is an herbal plant that has many diverse uses such as an aid for digestion, a remedy for headaches, an antidote, and an expectorant. Asafoetida has been known to be used on some mental impairment but not very often has it been shown to make any significant difference except for mild anxiety. Therefore it focuses primarily on bodily functions where it can do greater good.

As mentioned earlier, it works on gas and the bloating associated with it but further it also eases indigestion, rids stomach cramps, and helps with constipation, which is Asafoetida's contribution in the digestion department.

When it comes to headaches, when Asafoetida is mixed with water it is showing great promise for the treatment of migraines and tension headaches. As an antidote, it works great for snake bites and an insect repellent when it is mixed with garlic.

As an expectorant the Asafoetida oil helps to rid the body of excess mucus and eases the respiratory system.

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Many use it for whooping cough, asthma, and bronchitis. Where expectoration is a problem asafetida helps in expelling accumulated cough. Some mixtures that seem to blend together well for coughs and as expectorants are roasted fresh resinous gum powder with real ghee or a mixture of asafetida powder with honey, white onion juice, betel nut juice and dry ginger.

Asafoetida has a very unpleasant odor to it, so bad that many call it the "Devil's Dung." The foul odor comes from the resin that is removed from the plant's stem and root. Asafoetida is a species of the fennel plant but a relative to the carrot.

The wicked odor is formed from the organic sulfur compound found as part of the essential oils. When it comes to the value of the Asafoetida tree, the older, the better and trees less than four years of age are virtually worthless.

When buying Asafoetida in the marketplace it will likely be available in three different forms, one is called tears which are commonly sold in Chinese pharmacies and characteristically may have fragments of root and earth. It is also sold in a paste which is very commonly used as a condiment for flavoring such dishes as curry, to flavor beans, sauces, pickles, and many use it as a substitute for garlic.

A few other unique things that Asafoetida is used for is that if used in recipes regularly it has been suggested that it may increase the chances of male fertility. Often it is used for toothaches as well.

Balsam of Tolu

Balsam of Tolu is an herb that comes from a very tall tree that can be found in Columbia, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia. This herbal plant has also been called Balsam of Peru because it was originally exported primarily from Peru but that is no longer the case.

The resin of this tree is what is most valuable and is retrieved in the same fashion that one collects the valuable properties from a rubber tree by tapping into it. The gummy resin that comes from the tree is then turned into balsam. Today, the main exporters of Balsam of Tolu are El Salvador, Columbia, and Venezuela.

In earlier times it was tribal groups from Mexico and Central America that used the leaves of Balsam of Tolu to treat such common ailments as external wounds, asthma, colds, flu, and arthritis. Some native Indians used the bark in a powdered form as an underarm deodorant while others found it best for lung and cold ailments.

Those who originated in the rainforest tribes used Balsam of Tolu quite frequently for many

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medicinal purposes such as abscesses, asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, headache, rheumatism, sores, sprains, tuberculosis, venereal diseases, and wounds.

As this herbal plant grew in popularity, it was the Europeans who wanted in on the action and soon the Germans were using it for pharmaceutical purposes as well.

They found that Balsam of Tolu worked very well for antibacterial, antifungal, and antiparasitic purposes so they immediately started using it for such things as scabies, ringworm, lice, minor ulcerations, wounds, bedsores, and diaper rash. Today, it is used very often in topical salves for the treatment of wounds, ulcers, and scabies.

It can be found in hair tonics, antidandruff shampoos, and feminine hygiene sprays and as a natural fragrance in soaps, detergents, creams, lotions, and perfumes. In the early 1800's, the United States wanted to utilize Balsam of Tolu as well but used it mainly for treatments as cough suppressants and respiratory aids used in cough lozenges and syrups, for sore throats, and as a vapor inhalant for respiratory distress.

Balsam of Tolu has a vanilla like smell and taste and it is used mostly for flavoring cough syrups, soft drinks, confectionaries, and chewing gums. Balsam of Tolu is widely available now in the U.S. The essential oil distilled from the gum is sold in small bottles and used topically, in aromatherapy.

The fragrance is considered to be healing and comforting. It is useful for meditation and relaxation which is why it has become so popular amongst the world of aromatherapy. Balsam of Tolu has a very unique aroma which makes it excellent for exotic floral fragrances.

Generally its topical use is recommended for skin rashes, eczema, and skin parasites such as scabies, ringworm, and head lice. Balsam of Tolu is considered sensitizing oil which means that it is more likely to cause an allergic reaction to the skin or be a skin irritant than other herbal oils might be in people who are sensitive or commonly have allergies to plants and herbs.

Basil

Originally, Basil was not the most popular herb in the bunch. Actually there were some who simply hated it, mainly the ancient people. The name basil means "be fragrant" but still various cultures battled with a love hate relationship over basil. Americans and Romans loved it while Hindus plant it in their homes as a sign of happiness.

On the contrary it was the Greeks who despised it most but those from India and Persia were not too fond of it either. One place that took a special liking to Basil was Italy and to this day not many people prepare a classic pasta sauce without the Basil.

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To this day basil and tomato sauce have formed somewhat of a marriage almost globally. Basil is very easy to grow as long as the temperature does not fall below 50 degrees and is in full sunshine. It is popularly used both in the fresh form as well as the dried. A rare known fact about Basil is that the longer it simmers in a dish the more the flavor intensifies.

This makes sense as to why people simmer their pasta sauces for so long, to bring out all of the rich herb flavors. Normally in pasta sauces Basil is used in combination with Oregano. However, Basil is not just used for pasta or tomato sauce, it is also used for flavoring fish, vegetables, meats, and soups.

If you decide to grow an herb garden, you can thank the Basil plants for keeping the flies away as flies are also part of the group that does not care for Basil. Another interesting fact about Basil is that it was considered a royal herb with a strong association pertaining to love.

Basil had a relationship with how men of a much earlier time planned on proposing to their fair maidens. The man would bring a branch of Basil and if the woman accepted his gift she silently agreed to love him and be faithful to him for eternity.

Basil is related to the Mint family and just knowing that should give you a good idea that it will have many medicinal uses as well. Right away most people associate anything mint with aiding the digestive system and also for its anti gas properties. Herbalists use Basil quite commonly for health ailments such as stomach cramps, vomiting, constipation, headaches and anxiety. When Basil is used for these purposes it is generally made into a hot tea for drinking. Some also claim that a nice hot cup of Basil tea can contribute greatly to a good nights sleep. At herbal stores you can also purchase Basil capsules as well if you do not care for the taste of the tea.

Basil is still one of the most common household herbs used today and in most areas of culinary art it is a necessity there too. When used in its freshest form, Basil is torn from the plant and then just minced up with a knife. Usually somewhere nearby the Basil you will find some olive oil, garlic, and someone getting ready to prepare a fantastic tomato sauce.

Belladonna

Belladonna is not an herb that you are going to want to stock your pantry with. While it has its benefits, this is an herb that can be very dangerous and sometimes even fatal. It has some medicinal properties to it and has an interesting history but it can be very dangerous. The nickname "deadly nightshade" is a good clue of its potency.

There is however a tincture that comes from this plant that is used for medicinal purposes. Belladonna is a perennial herb that is native to Europe and Asia Minor but is now grown quite often in the United States, Europe, and India. When the plant is in full bloom the plant is

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harvested and then dried for use.

The most important contribution from Belladonna is atropine which is an important agent that is useful in dilating the pupils of the eye. This has proven to be very beneficial. Even small doses of atropine can cause the heart rate to increase.

Some cough syrups are known to contain atropine and are used for bronchitis and whooping cough. Further it is used to soothe the stomach lining prior to an anesthetic being administered and also for peptic ulcers.

Belladonna goes by many different names but has been used for over 500 years. While growing in the wild, which belladonna commonly does, a slight dose can be fatal. In the earliest times when Belladonna was first used it was cosmetic purposes.

Women felt that if they used it to dilate their pupils that they would look more sexy and alluring. That is why the name Belladonna means "beautiful lady" in Italian. Yet, it is still used in many eye doctors' offices across the country to this day.

Belladonna also has other great benefits for purposes of what it is used for today as it has the ability to dry up bodily fluids such as breast milk, saliva, perspiration, and mucous. The alkaloids in Belladonna are used for many conditions such as gastrointestinal disorders such as colitis, diverticulitis, irritable bowel syndrome, colic, diarrhea, and peptic ulcer.

It also works for asthma, excessive sweating, excessive nighttime urination and incontinence, headaches and migraines, muscle pains and spasms, motion sickness, Parkinson's disease, and biliary colic.

Quite often Belladonna is used as homeopathic remedies such as the common cold, earaches, fever, menstrual cramps, sunstroke, toothaches, headaches, sore throats, and boils. How the patient ingests and how much they ingest is determined by a few various factors such as their symptoms, mood, and overall temperament. When Belladonna is administered for homeopathic use it is highly diluted because of the toxicity level of it.

No one should ever use Belladonna as a self help measure and it should only be taken under the care of a qualified doctor. The doses given of Belladonna are always in very low doses.

When Belladonna is prescribed it is either added to sugar pellets or mixed with other types of drugs and is available by prescription only. So while it is clear that Belladonna is an extremely dangerous herb it is also very beneficial when used correctly.

Burdock

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Burdock is a plant that is related to the daisy family. It is also closely related to Echinacea, Dandelion, and Feverfew. Burdock is an herb but it is one that has been much neglected when it comes to getting attention. Back in ancient times the Greeks used the roots, the seeds, and the greens and used them for healing purposes. Throughout the Middle Ages Burdock was used for both food and medicine.

Today, Burdock is still used for such things as easing liver problems and digestive disorders. It was also found to be very effective for cleansing the skin for problems such as acne and also to assist in digestive problems. To this day throughout Europe the stalk and the greens are still eaten because they hold such valuable nutrition and vitamin values.

As more and more research is being done on Burdock many new and interesting discoveries are cropping up. A relationship is being examined between Burdock and its anti fungal and anti bacterial properties, and even more important it is showing signs of possibly being able to fight against tumors and could be a cancer fighting agent as well.

Research has shown that since many of the cancer causing compounds are in almost all foods which are then eaten and stored in the human fat tissues that Burdock might very well be of help in fighting cancer because of the role that it can play in depleting these mutagens.

Burdock is also very helpful in strengthening the immune system when it has become weakened by environmental factors. When mixed with other herbs such as Dandelion and Ginger it can be a very powerful blood purifier.

The most unique fact about Burdock is that it has a very high amount of insulin which is a natural occurring chemical within the body that mimics actions of insulin. Because of this, Burdock has been successful in helping combat hypoglycemia and pre diabetes conditions.

If you look for Burdock in the market you may find it called gobo instead as that is what some refer to it as. It is often combined with other vegetables or added to Tofu. Some boil Burdock while others sauté or deep fry it. Many have said it might not be such a good idea to look at Burdock before you eat it because you might change your mind about taking a bite.

It looks thick, dark, and woody but indeed the opposite is true when it comes to the taste. Burdock is well recognized as a health food because it has low calorie content and a high fiber intake. It is also loaded with potassium, iron, and calcium. People claim that Burdock tastes like nothing else. In other words it has a taste all of its own.

The best description that people can agree on when it comes to the flavor of Burdock is that it is sweet yet earthy, with a tender and crisp texture. It is often added to stews, soups, and stir fries. In the form of food, Burdock is highly nutritional and full of vitamins but in retrospect Burdock is also an effective herb for bringing the body back into balance.

Catnip

"Catnip" is the common name for a perennial herb of the mint family. Catnip is native to Europe and is imported into the United States. In North America it is a common widespread weed. Catnip is most popular with cats and the reaction that it causes in them when they receive some dried nip from their owner.

They roll around in it in all of their glory. The fact is that humans do not smell what cats smell when it comes to catnip so humans do not react the same way that cats do. It is known that the chemical nepetalactone in catnip is the thing that triggers the response. Apparently, it somehow kicks off a stereotypical pattern in cats that are sensitive to the chemical.

In humans catnip has been used for several ailments including the treatment of colic, headache, toothache, colds, and spasms. It is also known to induce sleep in most people but in others it can have a counter effect.

Catnip also has antibacterial properties to it too. In the 15th century the English cooks would season meats with catnip and also add a pinch to salads. Many people also prefer catnip tea to Chinese tea. Some of the agents in catnip also act as a very effective cockroach repellent. It has actually been proven to be more effective by 100% than DEET.

When taken orally, catnip shows a great benefit for anxiety, insomnia, and nervousness. Nepetalactone is the active ingredient in catnip and is commonly used as an herbal sedative. Because of this it is also great for easing migraine headaches, stomach complaints, and also reduces swelling associated with arthritis, hemorrhoids, and soft tissue injuries.

Catnip can be purchased in a liquid, dried, or a capsule form. It is the dried form that is commonly brewed into a tea. Folklore has it that if catnip is smoked it might produce minor hallucinogenic effects but that has since been disregarded. It was also said that when children would throw fits that catnip would be able to calm them and also stop children from having nightmares.

Some claims have been made that catnip is a distant relative of marijuana. There really is no validity to this claim except for the way that the cats act when they roll around in the nip which looks like they have a buzz.

When the cat rolls around in it a euphoric effect is displayed but if the cat eats any of the nips, he is certain to fall fast asleep. Catnip has been called the mysterious herb by many. It is related to common kitchen herbs like thyme and sage, and can be easily cultivated as a houseplant.

Another fact about Catnip is that as much as cats seem to love it is as much as mosquitoes hate it. These are all the things that make catnip such a unique herb that it has the ability to

entertain cats, it has medicinal properties, there are a few funny myths about it and is an insect repellent all in one.

Chamomile

Chamomile is an herb that has been used for thousands of years for many ailments including gas, diarrhea, stomach upset, sleeplessness, and anxiety. It can also be used topically for certain skin lesions. The Chamomile plant has flowering tops and these are what are used for making tea and other herbal remedies that include Chamomile.

When Chamomile tops are stewed and then drained the liquid is a deep yellow color and can be lightly sweetened if preferred. It has a very unique taste to it and many women used to make sure they always had a few baby bottles tucked safely away in the refrigerator in case their baby got gas. It was used before the days of over the counter gas relief drops and although there is no scientific validity to it, it always seemed to make the baby stop wailing and fall fast asleep.

It was also given to women for menstrual cramps in the days before Midol and Pamprin. Chamomile also has some calming properties to it so it can be very beneficial to sip on during the day if you are feeling anxious or if the muscles in your body are tense from anxiety and stress it is said that Chamomile can help to relieve that.

Chamomile produces an oil that when isolated turns a very unique bluish color and this has very distinct anti-inflammatory properties to it so it has been known to work very well on skin infections, eczema, and inflamed skin. This would be Chamomile in its topical form rather than the flowers or the tea from the flowers.

Again, remember that Chamomile was around for a long time before many over the counter and prescription medications were so readily available. For years all many people had to rely on was herbal remedies that were likely passed down from generations and possibly continued to be passed down even after the newer medications did come to the forefront.

Often when small children had bug bites, diaper rashes, or eczema, the mother would fill a stocking with Chamomile and oatmeal and let it soak in the tub with her children. It was very effective in stopping the itch and improving the diaper rash.

Chamomile was also used in combination with other herbs for a lot of other purposes such as if one felt nauseous, a combination of Chamomile, shredded licorice root, fennel seeds, and peppermint would cure that pretty quickly. Because Chamomile is part of the Ragweed family you should not ingest it if you have an allergy to Ragweed.

Some people love to sip a hot cup of Chamomile tea with no ailments at all, just because they enjoy it. Pregnant and nursing mothers are advised to stay away from all herbs but Chamomile

is the exception to this rule.

It is completely safe for anyone to drink at any time. It has even been known to help teething babies too. On a final note Chamomile has been known to be an excellent hair conditioner and to sooth scalps. When mixed with a bit of lemon and sunshine it has also been known to give subtle natural highlights to hair.

Cilantro

Cilantro is a very fast growing herb which can be grown just about anywhere. It is a relative of the carrot family and is sometimes called Chinese parsley and Coriander. Cilantro actually is the leaves and stems of the Coriander plant.

It has a very strong unique odor and is relied on heavily for Mexican, Asian, and Caribbean cuisine.

Cilantro also resembles Parsley which is not surprising since the two are related. For thousands of years Cilantro has been around, first in Egypt, India, and China and then it was introduced to Mexico and Peru where it is still used with chilies when making masterful food dishes. It has since become very popular in certain parts of the United States as well. Today, Cilantro has lost its popularity in Europe as most Europeans are repulsed by the very smell of it.

Cilantro is a Greek word that means "koris" which in English means bedbug oddly enough because it is said by many that Cilantro smells like a bedbug. The Chinese did not seem to mind because they add Cilantro to their various love potions because to them it symbolizes immortality and has aphrodisiac properties to it. Many also say that it is an appetite stimulant. Cilantro is very easy to find in pretty much any local grocery store or fruit market any time of the year.

Cilantro has an interesting history to it and has showed up many times throughout history. Keep in mind that Cilantro is also in part Coriander, and some seeds were found in King Tut's tomb. It is also mentioned in the Old Testament and was used by physicians dated back as far as Hippocrates. The Ancient Egyptians used Cilantro for such things as headaches and urinary tract infections.

Cilantro can also mask the scent of rotting meat and it was used for that purpose quite frequently by earlier cultures. It would be fair to say that Cilantro is an herbal plant that has two identities since Cilantro is what the plant is referred to in its earliest stages and when it is fully developed it then becomes Coriander.

Cilantro grows very quickly but also dies very quickly but it can easy grow in a pot on your windowsill. It is always best to harvest Cilantro before it bolts or blooms. If you wait too long to harvest Cilantro what will happen is that you will be harvesting Coriander because it will then be

all seed.

Today, Cilantro can be found just about anywhere in the United States and is a garnish on almost every plate served in an upscale restaurant. The odd thing about Cilantro is that most people either love it or they hate it, usually there is no in between.

Those who hate it claim that it has a soapy taste while those who love it claim that it is a strong taste that Cilantro delivers but they do enjoy its pungency. Cilantro is sold as fresh and if you find it in a dried form do not waste your time with it because drying it causes it to lose its entire flavor.

Cloves

Cloves are definitely one of the most distinct herbs around but ironically enough, cloves have been around forever and are not finished doing business just yet. Usually if you can not get your hands on some cloves, Allspice can be a substitute.

Cloves have some preservative properties to them but they work well as an antiseptic, expectorant, anesthetic, or an emmenagogue, working well on the kidneys, the spleen and the stomach.

Some make a combination of cloves, bay leaves, cinnamon, and marjoram for a hot tea that helps bronchitis, asthma, coughs, a tendency to infection, tuberculosis, altitude sickness, nervous stomach, nausea, diarrhea, flatulence, indigestion, dyspepsia, gastroenteritis, the side effects of lobelia, and depression. Sometimes people mix cloves with hot water, again making a tea and claim that it helps them get a good night's sleep.

Cloves and ginger is a sure way to settle the stomach and stop vomiting. If you combine equal parts of cloves and basil it is supposed to detox meals from the body. Cloves have been used for failing eyesight and tooth problems.

It was used for earaches very often throughout history as putting a little warmed oil of clove on a piece of cotton and in your ear was certain to rid any earache. Mostly, cloves are known for being warm and spicy but also have a strong relationship with pain relief, easing nausea and vomiting, and improving digestion. Cloves also kill intestinal parasites and act as an antimicrobial agent against fungi and bacteria. It has also been suggested that cloves have antihistamine properties as well.

Do not be too quick to pass off the possibilities of cloves and aromatherapy as the two have a very strong bond between them. Since cloves have such a positive and stimulating effect on the mind they pair up great with other oils for aromatherapy purposes. In the 16th and 17th centuries cloves were worth their weight in gold however it is the clove oil that is most

essential.

In Indonesia many people smoke clove cigarettes and that did spill over into the United States for a while but lost most of its vigor when it was found that clove cigarettes could cause adult respiratory distress syndrome.

The word clove comes from the Latin word "clavus" which means nail. If you have ever looked at a clove you will notice that it does resemble a nail. Many people use whole cloves when they cook ham by sticking the spiky part around the outer edges of the ham for extra flavor. Indian curries can not do without cloves but it is also used in pickles, sauces, Worcestershire sauce, and even spice cakes that are baked from scratch.

Throughout history cloves has never been forgotten but has lost some of its popularity. Some still use it as a spice and some for minor dentistry and even still more for the purpose of aromatherapy. People still look at cloves as an "old fashioned" herb. For some families it has been passed down through generations and in the pantry still sits a jar of whole cloves for that special ham dinner.

Dandelion

The Dandelion is an herbaceous plant that really is much more than just a nuisance in your yard. For all purposes, the Dandelion leaves are at their best just as they emerge from the ground and they are very distinct as nothing really resembles this at all. Depending on when you harvest the Dandelion leaves will determine the bitterness of them but it is an appealing bitterness.

These leaves that are considered an herb blend nicely with salads and do well either sautéed or steamed. Many claim the taste is similar to that of endive. People who are into eating the fruits of nature claim that it is perfectly acceptable to eat the Dandelion flower as well. Some claim that they make outstanding fritters if they are battered up and fried and make a colorful contribution to any stir fry.

Dandelions leaves are actually extremely nutritious, much more so than any herb that can be purchased in the stores. They are higher in beta carotene than carrots are and they have more iron and calcium and iron than spinach does.

Dandelion leaves are also full of vitamins B-1, B-2, B-5, B-6, B-12, C, E, P, D, biotin, inositol, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc. Dandelion root is one of the safest and most popular herbal remedies on the market and is widely used today.

Traditionally it can be made into a tonic that is known for strengthening the entire body, especially the liver and gallbladder because it promotes the flow of bile. Dandelion root contains taraxacin so it reduces the inflammation to the bile ducts and reduces gallstones. It is

commonly used for Hepatitis, liver swelling, and jaundice. It also helps with indigestion.

This plant also goes by the French name, Pissenlit. Ironically enough when used in the tea form made by the leaves or the root has a tendency to act as a diuretic on the kidneys. Over the counter diuretics have a tendency to suck the potassium out of the body but not the Dandelion leaves.

Dandelion root tea has helped some actually avoid surgery for urinary stones. Dandelions are really just good for overall health and well being so just about anyone could benefit from a cup of dandelion tea. Many herbalists say that incorporated the Dandelion plant into dinner each night will assist in easier digestion.

When you take a Dandelion plant and break the stem you will find a milky white substance inside. This substance is great for removing warts, pimples, moles, calluses, soothing of bee stings, and blisters. Some other things that Dandelion has been popular in the past for is making Dandelion jam and others use it for a coffee substitute when it is roasted and ground Dandelion root. Many also drink Dandelion wine.

Today, Europeans use plenty of Dandelion roots to make herbal medicines and find it hard to believe that Americans refer to this highly beneficial plant as a weed when it has such positive benefits for the liver, spleen, kidneys, bladder, and the stomach.

Echinacea

Echinacea is an herb that is extremely effective and holds multiple purposes. There are nine different species of Echinacea but the one most commonly used and referred to is the Echinacea purpurea.

Many people take Echinacea everyday to prevent colds, flu, and any other types of infections that might be running rampant at the time as Echinacea has been known for strengthening the immune system. Some people also use Echinacea for the treatment of acne and boils. The entire Echinacea plant including the roots are dried and made into teas, juices, and tonics.

While many swear by the power and strength of Echinacea there is no scientific backing that gives these claims any validity whatsoever. The Natives used to use Echinacea for many different things including the treatment of poisonous snake bites and insect bites. Back in the 1800's Echinacea played a very large part of United States medicine and then spread to Germany where they too used it for many medical purposes.

It was then used as an antibiotic and continued on until better antibiotics were made available. For years Echinacea sort of lost it's pizzazz but more recently gained back its popularity. Many think the reason for that is because there is still no cure for the common cold.

There are many various parts of the Echinacea plant that are used to make medicine but most often it is the roots that are of the most value. Echinacea can be administered in many different ways such as in a tablets, capsules, juice, tea, extracts and tinctures. Some are made from the flower in full bloom and others are made from the root itself.

Echinacea is also available in a topical solution or cream that many use for creams, lotions, mouthwashes, ointments, skin washes, and toothpastes. Further it is becoming quite common to add Echinacea to particular cosmetics as an anti aging remedy but that claim has no validity at all as there is no relationship between anti aging and Echinacea.

Echinacea is an extremely beneficial herb for helping the body rid itself of microbial infections. When combined with other herbs such as Yarrow and Bearberry it is said to work great combating cystitis however

Echinacea has yet to be endorsed by the FDA for safety or effectiveness. Those who use Echinacea for the common cold swear by it and it is recommended that for the most effectiveness you should begin taking Echinacea when you notice the very first symptoms of a cold and then stay on it for three weeks and stop taking it for one week.

There are some who would be at risk if they took Echinacea such as people with multiple sclerosis, white blood cell disorders, collagen disorders, HIV/AIDS, autoimmune disorders, or tuberculosis. Heed caution also if you have any plant allergies; take other medications, or herbal remedies. Children should not take Echinacea, nor should pregnant women or nursing mothers.

Also, people who are on steroid medicine including betamethasone, cortisone, hydrocortisone, methylprednisolone, prednisolone, triamcinolone, cyclosporine, tacrolimus, azathioprine, or other immune system suppressants should avoid the use of Echinacea.

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus is an aromatic herb that has properties that provide great relief as a decongestant and an expectorant. For centuries Vick's which is made as a Eucalyptus rub is applied to the back and chest of a person who has a common cold or any other respiratory distress. It is known to loosen the mucus in the chest so that it can be coughed up and expelled.

Eucalyptus also has some antibiotic association with it. Eucalyptus has both internal and external uses. Internally it is the leaves that are used for herbal teas that are able to assist people by acting as a diuretic, an anti-diabetic and also has some anti-tumor properties.

The Eucalyptus oils are almost never used internally or ingested but on rare occasion a doctor

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might use a miniscule amount for nasal congestion, bronchial disease and other respiratory problems.

Externally, Eucalyptus is used as a vapor rub and while it is recommended that it be rubbed on the chest and back area it is also good for inhalation in such ways as steam vaporizers. Some even boil water and drop a teaspoon of vapor rub into it so an ill person can breathe in the fumes which will help to break up the congestion in the lungs. Quite often people have used the very same rub for sprains, bruises, and muscle aches and pains.

Never underestimate the power of Eucalyptus oil as it can be beneficial for many reasons. First it is a very powerful antiseptic, it is used to treat pyorrhea which is a gum disease. It is often used to treat burns too.

One thing you can bank on is that insects do not like Eucalyptus so if you mix some with water and put it in a spray bottle you can be sure that bugs will stay away. A small drop on the tip of the tongue is said to take away nausea.

Many people will soak a cloth in Eucalyptus and put them in their pantries or closets to fend off bugs and roaches. Another quick tip is a few sniffs of Eucalyptus is said to help someone who has fainted and when mixed with cinnamon is known to alleviate the symptoms of the flu.

Eucalyptus is also commonly used for aromatherapy too because when mixed with other oils it is extremely beneficial. The effects of Eucalyptus are stimulating and balancing and the scent is very woody.

For the purposes of aromatherapy it blends well with Juniper, Lavender, and Marjoram. Eucalyptus when used in aromatherapy does the body good as it helps to relieve mental fatigue, improves mental clarity and alertness, sharpens the senses, refreshes and revives, stimulating, energizing.

It also has great effects on the body as it feels cooling; it relieves pain and sore muscles, breaks up congestion, and reduces inflammation. Eucalyptus incorporated with aromatherapy offers pure enjoyment. Inhaling the fragrance of Eucalyptus can reduce stress and lessen depression. It makes for an overall sense of better well being. Eucalyptus is great for both bathing and also for massage oils.

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