Veterinary Herbal Medicine

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CONTENTS

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

PLANT CHEMISTRY

MEDICINAL AND THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS OF HERBS

PART 2

HERBAL PROFILES

ALFALFA

ALOE VERA

AGRIMONY

BARBERRY

BARLEYGRASS

BEARBERRY

BUCHU

CASCARA SAGRADA

CAYENNE

CHAMOMILE

CLEAVERS

COUCHGRASS

DANDELION ROOT

ELDER

EUCALYPTUS

GARLIC

GENTIAN

GINGER

GOLDEN ROD

GRAVEL ROOT

HAWTHORN

HOPS

HORSETAIL

HYDRANGEA

JUNIPER

LIQUORICE

MARSHMALLOW

MILK THISTLE

NETTLES

PARSLEY

PARSLEY PIERT

PEPPERMINT

RASPBERRY

RHUBARB

SEAWEED

SKULLCAP

SLIPPERY ELM BARK

VALERIAN

VERVAIN

WHEAT GRASS

PART 3

THERAPEUTIC INDEX

HERBAL MEDICINE

INTRODUCTION

The art of using plants to heal, that is the therapeutic or medicinal use of herbal remedies, is not new. It is, in fact, an ancient system of healing which is undergoing a revival in the light of modern analytical methods and new-found knowledge and understanding. Herbal remedies whose uses were once simply handed down by folk lore and backed by little evidence of efficacy, can now be safely prescribed backed by a sound knowledge of plant chemistry and botanical therapeutics. Today herbal medicine is seen as having a world-wide presence not only as represented by the use of healing plants in Western culture, but as being an integral part of Indian Ayurvedic medicine and combined with acupuncture as part of Traditional Chinese Medicine or TCM. In recognition of the growing importance of this type of treatment, herbal medicine is more often referred to by a much more appropriate modern term; phytotherapy.

A BRIEF HISTORY

One of the earliest recorded uses of herbal medicines dates back to the Egyptians, but it is more than likely that plants were used long before this, probably by the Chinese. The use of medicinal plants is also documented by the Babylonians (around 750 BC) and by the Mesopotamians. Enough details were included in the "materia-medica" (a textbook detailing plant and their medicinal properties and formulae for patent mixtures) of the time, to be utilised later by the Greeks, Romans and Arabs.

It was the Greek physician Hippocrates (who lived around 400 BC), who was the first to take a rational view of medicine and to look seriously how herbs might be applied to instigate healing. His model of health was based on a balance of four main principles, earth, fire, water and air and their bodily representations, the cardinal humours, blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. For a state of health to exist, the humours must be in balance that is in a state of harmonious equilibrium for the animal or person to be healthy. If the balance of the humours was disturbed, then symptoms of ill-health would appear in the patient. These signs were then treated by using plant-based medicines to correct imbalances in the humours, with the prescription based on the known medicinal properties of the medicinal plants available at the time.

The era of Hippocrates was also the time which saw the emergence of the Doctrine of Signatures which held the belief that the appearance of plants bore some resemblance to the conditions that they could possibly be used to treat. The cut surface of a nutmeg, for example, bears some similarities to the appearance of the brain and was said to help with disorders of the brain. The patchy leaves of Lungwort were used to treat chest conditions based on the fact that they resembled diseased lungs and the bright yellow flowers of Dandelion suggested its use in treating liver disorders such as jaundice.

Further advances in plant-based healing occurred around 150 A.D. when Galen, the personal physician to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, made extensive studies based on the work of Hippocrates. He published several books which became classics, detailing and classifying plant-based medicines and their individual preparation. Galen was also the founder of the Galenic pharmacy which centred around the science of preparing medicines. Some plant preparations, referred to as Galenicals, as still in use today. Another Greek, Dioscorides, served as military physician to the Roman emperor Nero. He set about collecting medicinal plants from the Mediterranean area and published his work, De Materia Medica, around AD 78. Over the years, the vast store of knowledge collected by the Romans and Greeks, formed the foundation for the medicinal practices of the Arabs. Through conquest, their knowledge spread to Spain and then on to the rest of Europe.

In Great Britain, the use of herbal medicine pre-dates the arrival of the Romans by some considerable time. The druids were skilled in the use of herbal remedies which included many sacred herbs such as Henbane, Mistletoe, Monkshood and Primrose. After the Romans left Britain, their knowledge, based on the works of Hippocrates and Dioscorides, remained. It is likely therefore, that the medicinal knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons, far exceeded those of their European neighbours in relation to the use of medicinal and healing plants.

Some of the most famous healers were those working in Myddfai in Wales, in the 6th century. These were doctors rather than druids, but it was the monks that passed on healing traditions through the abbeys and monasteries. Many of their libraries contained extracts from Roman and Greek texts on herbal remedies. The monk's duties included caring for the sick so that each monastery would have a physic garden to grow healing herbs. It was also customary for many manor houses to grow herbs for use in treating the workers of the house and estate.

Around this time, the increase in the availability of printed books resulted in the appearance of some of the most popular books on herbal medicine. A New Herball was produced by William Turner, the physician and father of English botany, in 1551. Master surgeon John Gerard published his now famous book on herbal medicine, The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes in 1597. A much later herbal, The English Physitian published in 1652 by Nicholas Culpepper, promoted herbal medicine at a time when orthodox medicine was increasingly turning to the use of toxic metals and physical means to fight disease. Despite this, herbal remedies still formed a large part of the apothecaries stock as plant based medicines were the mainstay of treatment for most of the general population of the time.

The 17th century saw the establishment of some of the most famous of the physic gardens including the Chelsea physic garden created for the society of apothecaries in 1673. Others were created in Oxford and Edinburgh. The publication of The Complete Herbal of Physical Plants by John Pechey published in 1694 earmarked the end of the 17th century. The following century saw the establishment of better laboratory techniques and the development of chemistry as a science. This in turn led to the isolation of some of the active constituents within plant based medicines. Despite this fact, during the 19th century, the use of herbal medicines declined a trend which continued well into the 20th century with the advent of pharmacology and modern drug based medicine.

Over the past 10-15 years however, we have seen an increasing interest in alternative therapies, herbalism included. Along with this fact, scientific advances have been made in isolating many of the active ingredients in plants, explaining rationally how and why many plant based remedies work. Consequently many of the old wives tales and the folk lore related to some of the more common herbal remedies, information which has been handed down from one generation to another, can be explained scientifically. Commercial interest in plant medicines has also increased in the never ending search to isolate new compounds on which to base new drugs. This concept is not new, many of the drugs we take for granted now where originally based on plant compounds. In this list we can include Foxglove on which digitalis and related drugs are based, Wild yam from which steroids were first synthesised and Meadowsweet from which salicylic acid, the forerunner of aspirin, was first discovered in 1839.

Most herbalists would support the fact though, that single isolated compounds do not always work as well or as effectively as those present naturally in the whole plant. Each individual herbal remedy contains a multitude of different compounds which augment and balance each other. It is mainly because of this reason, that most herbal remedies have few side effects as the individual ingredients tend to work in harmony together and with the body.

As such, herbal medicine is holistic in its approach. Since plants are an integral part of this planet, their use in healing means taking part in the planet's ecological cycle, putting us in more direct contact with nature. It is important to remember that we share a common biological ancestry with many of the basic elements found in plant cells. Herbalism can account for the patient as a whole, understanding that many factors combine to cause illness, for example stress, diet and environment. Where necessary, we can combine remedies to suit the patient. In fact, many herbs combine together to achieve a more profound healing effect. They act in a slow and subtle way, helping redress the balance even in instances where there is a deep seated nutritional or biochemical problem.

At one time herbal remedies were used regularly in veterinary medicine, especially in the early 1900's when most veterinary work involved treating horses and to a lesser extent dogs. Many of the patent mixtures used, contained plant remedies, as the textbooks of the time will testify. By the early 1980's few herbal products remained in practice. Nux vomica was still included in cattle stomach powders as a tonic and Chelidonium was used to help treat liver and urinary problems in dogs and cats. The following years saw the demise of these products at a time when general interest in herbal remedies was growing. Although a few herbal based medicines have reappeared lately in general veterinary practice, proprietary herbal products have existed for some time.

PLANT CHEMISTRY

From a scientific viewpoint, it is the chemical constituents of plants that produce physiological effects on the body and influence organ systems. Understanding plant pharmacology is not altogether vital in terms of using herbal remedies in practice, but is important in understanding the nature of how plants work and how they interact with the body. The majority of plants contain a huge range of compounds which perform specific functions or have specific properties. Chemists have categorised these into definitive groups to simplify how they are able to interact with the body.

Those herbs outlined in bold are included in Denes medicine, tinctures and supplement range.

Alcohols

These appear in different forms, including as the components of volatile oils. Menthol, which is a constituent of Peppermint, is a good example.

Alkaloids

These are potent compounds with wide-ranging effects on the body and on organ systems, particularly the circulatory and nervous systems. Their structures are often complex and most are poisonous to varying degrees.

Anthraquinones

This group includes plants that have purgative effects, the most familiar of which is Rhubarb.

Bitter principles

As their name suggests, this group contains constituents which have a bitter taste. Their main benefit is in stimulation of the digestive system and the liver by a reflex action through the taste buds. Gentian is included within this group.

Carbohydrates

Both the sugars and starches found in plants are classed as carbohydrates and act as energy sources. More highly complex carbohydrates form the basis of many of the demulcent, soothing components in herbs such as Marshmallow and Slippery Elm as well as in gums such as those in found in Seaweed.

Coumarins

Some compounds in this group have the characteristic smell of new mown hay and some, such as Horse Chestnut Bark, have the ability to strengthen capillary walls.

Flavones and flavonoid glycosides

This is an important group with wide-ranging effects, covering diuretics, anti-spasmodic and compounds that offer hepatic and cardiac support. A specific group, known as bioflavonoids, includes the compound rutin, which is present in Buckwheat and can increase the strength and permeability of blood vessel walls.

Glycosides

Cardiac glycosides have well known effects on the heart and have been used extensively in medicine. The most famous is foxglove, which became the forerunner of many of the modern heart drugs we use today.

Phenolic compounds

These have a wide range of chemical structures and are an important component of many plant constituents. One of the best known is salicylic acid which is found in combination with sugar in herbs such as Meadowsweet and Willow Bark.

Plant acids

Many plants contain acids, some of which will be very familiar. Nettles contain formic acid, which is responsible for the irritating sting. Citric acid will be even more familiar as a constituent of oranges, lemons and the like.

Saponins

Compounds in this category bear some structural similarities to cortisone and have been the subject of considerable research, particularly in relation to the sex hormones.

Tannins

Tannins have a binding, protective effect on mucus membranes and the skin, allowing healing. They can be useful in arresting diarrhoea, stopping bleeding and in drying up discharges. Tea contains tannins and hence the use of cold tea in treating conjunctivitis.

Volatile oils

Oils extracted from plants form the basis of aromatherapy and are responsible for many of the familiar herbal odours. Many aromatic plants contain complex mixtures of oils with varied properties, which include antiseptic, stimulatory and calming actions.

THE MEDICINAL and THERAPEUTIC ACTION of HERBS

Although knowledge of plant chemistry is clearly useful, it is more practical to classify herbs into different groups according to their medicinal actions. This enables herbalists to make full use of their properties and to make synergistic combinations to fulfil a specific requirement. Most herbs have a multitude of actions and will be included in several groups. Conversely any one individual herb, can similarly be used to treat a variety of conditions.

Those herbs outlined in bold are included in Denes medicine and supplement range.

Alternatives

Herbs in this group were once known as blood cleansers and are still widely used to slowly restore wellbeing and general vitality. Examples include Burdock, Garlic, Nettles and Cleavers.

Anthelmintic

These help to eliminate worms from the digestive tract but are not often used these days as they are likely to cause side effects in the quantities needed to be effective. Some such as Garlic can, however, be safely used as a deterrent to ward off infection by parasites.

Anti-catarrhal

As the name suggests, remedies in this category help remove excess mucus and catarrh. As such they are particularly useful in treating rhinitis, sinusitis and coughs. Useful examples include Sage, Thyme, Golden Rod (Solidago) and Garlic.

Anti-diarrhoeal

Herbs such as Peppermint, Agrimony, Cranesbill and Meadowsweet can help resolve diarrhoea through a number of different actions. Some help soothe the intestine such as Peppermint, whilst herbs such as Agrimony have an astringent (binding) action.

Anti-inflammatories

Remedies in this category help reduce inflammation and pain and have a wide number of applications ranging from helping with arthritis, soothing sore skin and healing the lining of the bowel. Examples include Chamomile, Meadowsweet and Marigold.

Anti-lithics

This important group help prevent the formation of stones and gravel in the urinary system and can assist with their removal. Useful examples include Buchu, Bearberry, Parsley Piert, Gravel root and Stone Root.

Anti-microbials

Herbs in this group act by fighting off infection, either by helping to destroy invading organisms or by supporting or strengthening the immune system. Examples include Garlic, Echinacea, Peppermint, Rosemary and Thyme.

Anti-spasmodic

Herbs which relieve spasm are termed anti-spasmodic and are utilised to help relieve cramping pains and the discomfort associated with colic and indigestion. Skullcap and Valerian are good examples.

Astringents

Tannins are the major component of most of the herbs in this category and act to tone or firm up tissue. They can also help by reducing discharges and secretions and will help limit bleeding where this is a problem. Examples include Agrimony, Raspberry, Yarrow, Slippery Elm Bark and Bearberry.

Bitters

Bitters have a bitter taste and stimulate the appetite, digestion and flow of digestive juices via a reflex action through the taste buds. Barberry and Gentian are good examples.

Cardiac

These are heart or cardiac tonics that help to support the heart and the circulation. Some of the herbs in this group such as Foxglove are very potent and very toxic if not used under supervision. Others such as Hawthorn are much less so, yet are still useful medicinally.

Carminatives

Herbs in this category help prevent colic and the associated abdominal pain. They contain volatile oils which stimulate the digestive system, relax the muscles of the stomach and encourage peristalsis. Aniseed, Peppermint, Dill, Valerian and Garlic are included in this list.

Cholagogues and Choleretics

Herbs in this category stimulate the production of bile from the liver (choleretics) or release of bile from the gall bladder (Cholagogues). Bile helps stimulate the digestive process and is also a natural laxative. Herbs which have these properties include Gentian, Dandelion, Barberry, Fringe tree, Milk Thistle and Peppermint.

Demulcents

The main action of demulcents is to protect and soothe mucous membranes. This action is especially useful where mucous membranes are sore or inflamed and will, in effect, allow healing to occur. Familiar examples include Marshmallow root, Liquorice, Parsley piert, Oats, Slippery Elm bark and Couch grass.

Diuretics

Diuretics increase the elimination of water from the body and consequently increase the output of urine. Their most familiar role is that of helping in the treatment of heart failure but from the herbalists viewpoint they are of most use in treating urinary tract disorders including kidney disease and bladder problems. Herbs with diuretic actions include Buchu, Bearberry, Cleavers, Dandelion leaf, Juniper, Parsley Piert, Golden Rod (Solidago), Yarrow and Burdock.

Emollients

Emollients are similar to demulcents except used externally to soothe and protect skin. Many of the herbs in this category are also used internally as demulcents. Examples of herbs with emollient properties include Comfrey, Liquorice, Mallow, Marshmallow and Slippery Elm.

Expectorants

This familiar group helps loosen and remove excess mucous from the airways. They work in a variety of ways. Some irritate the airways helping to expel mucous, while others loosen up any mucous so that it can be removed with less effort. Some also help destroy viruses and bacteria, as they have an antiseptic action. Examples include Aniseed, Garlic, Coltsfoot, Peppermint, Liquorice and Thyme.

Hepatics

The herbs in this category assist and support the liver and are useful in treating a variety of liver conditions. Most will also help increase either the production or flow of bile. Barberry, Milk Thistle, Dandelion root, Cleavers and Cascara are included within this group.

Hypoglycaemics

Herbs with this property can help lower blood sugar and are sometimes prescribed to help in the treatment of diabetes. Garlic, Fenugreek, Chicory and Nettles can be included under this category.

Laxatives

Included within this category are a number of herbs which can help relieve constipation. Some act to help stimulate and evacuate the bowel, others help to soften the stool. Examples include Dandelion root, Barberry, Cascara, Rhubarb Root and Cleavers.

Nervines

The main action of this group is on the nervous system. Some act as stimulants, others strengthen the nervous system generally and some tone it down. Ginseng, Oats, Hops, Valerian, Skullcap and Rosemary are good examples.

Sedatives

Herbs such as Valerian, Skullcap, Chamomile and Hops have actions that can help calm the nervous system and help reduce stress. They are particularly useful in treating nervous animals or those with behavioural problems.

Stimulants

As the name suggests, remedies in this category can help stimulate the body, acting through supporting some of basic physiological functions. Examples include Cayenne, Garlic, Ginseng, Peppermint, Mustard and Rosemary.

Tonics

There are a great many herbs which have properties as tonics. They act across the spectrum of body systems helping to strengthen and maintain specific organs and body functions. Examples include Agrimony, Bearberry (also known as Uva ursi), Cleavers, Garlic, Parsley, Raspberry and Skullcap.

Vulnerary

Vulneraries assist in the healing of minor wounds, sores and cuts and are applied externally. Some of the best known remedies include Calendula (Marigold), Aloe Vera, Arnica, Comfrey, Garlic and Yarrow.

HERBAL PROFILES

The following section on herbal profiles provides detailed outlines of most of the herbs includes in the Denes range of licensed herbal remedies and supplements. This includes an outline history of each remedy, parts of the plant used medicinally, constituents and medicinal actions. Finally veterinary indications are listed together with information on the appropriate Denes products.

AGRIMONY

Agrimonia eupatoria

Background

Agrimony is a perennial herb which is a common site on road verges, field margins, woodland clearings and on grassland areas. It has a short rhizome and an unbranched stem. The bright yellow flowers, which appear between June and September, are distinctive, star shaped and small. The name, Agrimony, is derived from the Greek agremone, a term applied to plants that are supposedly able to heal cataracts. The word eupatoria probably refers to Mithridates Eupator, King of Pontus, who introduced many herbal remedies at the time of the Romans. Still a popular medicinal plant today, Agrimony was used in the past to ward off snakes and more realistically to treat catarrh, bleeding and tuberculosis.

Parts used

Dried aerial parts

Constituents

- Glycosidal bitters
- Tannins
- Nicotinic acid
- Silicic acid
- Essential oil
- Iron
- Vitamins B & K

Medicinal actions

- Astringent

The tannin component of Agrimony is responsible for this action. Agrimony will help tone tissues by precipitating proteins and will reduce discharges and secretions. As such this remedy will help treat inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), diarrhoea and colitis.

- Carminative

Agrimony can be used where indigestion is a problem. Its carminative action will help dispel gas in the bowel and ease any discomfort.

- Tonic

This action is due to the general effect that Agrimony has on the digestive system. It works by increasing the production of digestive juices and liver secretions.

- Cholagogues

Agrimony stimulates the production of bile and consequently will improve the digestion.

- Hepatic

Like other hepatics, Agrimony will help support the liver.

Combinations

Agrimony combines well with Marshmallow and Liquorice in the treatment of diarrhoea and colitis.

Veterinary indications

- Diarrhoea
- Colitis
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Indigestion
- To help tone the digestion

Available in

Denes Digestion+ Powder

BARBERRY

Berberis vulgaris

Background

Barberry is a well-known shrub which has woody stems with short sharp spikes and pale green leaves. It is also known as the Pepperidge bush. It is common in gardens and can often be found in hedgerows or copses around England. The plant produces small yellow flowers and tiny red berries for which it once used to be cultivated. The broken stem bark has a bright yellow colour indicating its value in dealing with liver disease. Barberry roots were also once used to dye wool yellow.

Parts used

Bark of the root or stem.

Constituents

- Berberine
- Oxyacanthine
- Chelidamic acid
- Tannins

Medicinal actions

- Cholagogues

Barberry is an excellent remedy for stimulating the production of bile and assisting the process of digestion. It is also indicated in the treatment of cholecystitis.

- Hepatic

Poor liver function, congestion of the liver and jaundice can all benefit from Barberry. It fact it is one of the best remedies for helping with liver problems.

- Anti-emetic

Barberry is one of the remedies to help stop sickness, especially when combined with other herbal medicines such as peppermint.

- Laxative

Due to its action in increasing bile production, Barberry has an effect as a laxative which is suitable for treating mild constipation.

- Bitter tonic

As a bitter, Barberry will help stimulate appetite and can be used to cleanse and strengthen the whole body. It is useful in treating debilitated animals or animals with kidney problems.

Combinations

Barberry combines well with Dandelion in the treatment of liver problems and with Fringe tree bark for helping with gall bladder problems.

Veterinary indications

- Liver disease
- Cholecystitis
- Poor appetite
- Mild constipation
- Debility
- Recurrent sickness

Available in

Denes Kidney Support herbal tincture blend, (cat version, dog version)

BARLEYGRASS

Hordeum vulgare

Cultivation of this plant dates back to around 7000 BC so there is long history of it use in helping with health issues. In the early stage of its growth, the barley plant is much closer in composition to vegetables than to grains, hence the term 'barley grass'.

Barley grass is often used in powdered form and is made from the dried young leaves of the barley plant. These contain significant amounts of essential nutrients in concentrated amounts which are prevented from deterioration by harvesting the plant in early growth. This is because the nutrient content (vitamins, minerals, enzymes, amino acids, chlorophyll) of all young cereal grasses tends to change very rapidly as they grow. It reaches its peak when the plant is young, after which amounts deteriorate quickly.

Barley grass is a little like wheatgrass and nutritionally is very similar in composition although said to be more balanced in the range of nutrients it contains. The health benefits are broadly similar, but barley grass can also help with cell repair, scavenge damaging free radicals from the blood, reduce inflammation, improve the condition of the coat and skin and enhance overall vitality.

Available in

Denes All in One+ Powder

BEARBERRY

Arctostaphylos Uva-ursi

Background

Bearberry is a small evergreen shrub with leathery oval shaped leaves that grows on acid soils in Northern England, the Scottish Highlands and throughout Europe. The name of the plant is derived from two Greek words; Arctos meaning a bear and staphyl meaning grapes. It is said, that in some countries, bears enjoy the small red fruits and hence the name Bearberry. Some books will also list this herb by its other common name, Uva-ursi.

Parts used

Leaves

Constituents

- Glycosides (arbutin, ericolin)
- Tannins
- Organic acids

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

Bearberry increases the output of urine from the kidneys. This has the effect of helping to flush away debris and help prevent the build-up of gravel or stones as well as helping to prevent infections such as cystitis from occurring. This action also serves to flush toxins and waste products from the kidneys.

- Demulcent

Demulcents help protect mucus membranes and will reduce inflammation and allow healing. This is an especially important property with regard to helping treat chronic cystitis where the bladder lining is damaged and needs an opportunity to heal.

- Anti-microbial, Urinary antiseptic

These actions will help treat and prevent urinary infections such as cystitis and can help with some aspects of kidney disease.

- Astringent

The high tannin content of Bearberry is responsible for its astringent effect which has the action of toning the lining of the urinary system and preventing some forms of incontinence.

- Anti-lithic

Anti-lithic herbs help prevent the build-up of gravel and stones within the bladder and are useful in treating FLUTD in cats and urolithiasis in dogs.

Bearberry works best in alkaline urine and should not be used where there is a low urinary pH i.e. in acid urine.

Combinations

With Buchu and Parsley piert in the treatment of urinary disorders.

Veterinary indications

- Cystitis
- Kidney disease
- Urolithiasis, bladder stones or gravel, FLUTD
- Incontinence

Available in

Denes Bladder Support herbal tincture blend, (cat version, dog version)

BUCHU

Barosama betulina/Agathosma betulina

Background

Buchu is a small shrub like plant which is found in parts of South Africa. The dried leaves are used medicinally and collected when the plant is in flower or during fruiting. They have a strong aromatic taste and peppermint like odour.

Parts used

Leaves

Constituents

- Volatile oils, diophenol, limonene, methone
- Flavonoids
- Mucilage
- Resin

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

Buchu helps promote the flow of urine through the kidneys, helping to remove debris and waste products as well as reducing the risk of infection.

- Urinary antiseptic

The volatile oils in Buchu are responsible for helping deal with and prevent urinary tract infections such as cystitis, urethritis and prostatitis.

- Anti-lithic

Buchu, especially in combination with other herbal remedies will help prevent and treat problems associated with the build-up of gravel and stones in the bladder (urolithiasis).

- Tonic

Buchu acts as a general tonic to the urinary tract.

Combinations

With Bearberry and Parsley piert in the treatment of urinary disorders.

Veterinary indications

- Cystitis
- Urethritis
- Prostatitis
- Kidney disease

Available as

Denes Bladder Support herbal tincture blend, (cat version, dog version)

CASCARA SAGRADA

Rhamnus purshiana or Rhamnus cantharticus

Background

This remedy, known since Anglo-Saxon times, is more commonly known as the Californian Buckthorn, is a small deciduous shrub or tree with spiny branches which often end in thorns. The bark is used medicinally and appears smooth at first in younger plants, but later becomes rough and scaly. Buckthorn grows throughout Europe and is often found in hedgerows, scrub, woodland and fens. The common name for the plant is derived from cervi spina meaning a buck's thorn, referring to the spines on the branches. Cantharticus however, comes from the Greek katharticos meaning to purify or to clean, referring to the purgative nature of the plant and Rhamnus from the Greek for branch. Cascara was once used in veterinary practice as a mild purgative for dogs with constipation.

Parts used

Berries or dried bark.

Constituents

- Glycosides (anthraquinone derivatives)
- Flavonoids
- Pectin

Medicinal actions

- Laxative

This is the chief action of both the berries and dried bark. Cascara is used in the treatment of constipation in both chronic and more acute cases.

- Diuretic

Cascara has a mild diuretic action, helping to remove toxins from the system.

- Bitter tonic

The bitter action of cascara will help stimulate the digestion and improve the appetite.

Combinations

Cascara can be combined with Liquorice to help with digestive problems.

Veterinary indications

- Constipation
- To increase appetite

CAYENNE

Capsicum annuum

Background

Cayenne, the kitchen spice, which is also known as chili pepper, is made from the familiar red pepper which many people know as the bell pepper, sweet pepper or capsicum. The spices made from red peppers vary in strength from mild paprika to the hottest type of cayenne. The name cayenne is Caribbean in origin but most of the world's supply comes from Africa and India. Medicinally Cayenne is used both internally (in small quantities) and externally (as an ingredient in creams and liniments) to treat muscle spasms, cramps and back pain.

Parts used

Fruit

Constituents

- Capsaicin
- Carotenoids
- Flavonoids
- Essential oil
- Vitamin C

Medicinal actions

- Stimulant

This is one of the most important actions of this remedy, helping to stimulate the circulation. At the same time it regulates blood flow and will strengthen the heart and blood vessels. It will help in general with poor or sluggish circulation and is especially useful where the circulation to the lower limbs is poor. Cayenne also stimulates blood flow to the kidneys and the liver.

- Carminative

Cayenne acts as general tonic for the digestive system and can help with both flatulence and colic like symptoms.

- Tonic

The effects of cayenne on the circulation and blood flow lead to its use as a general tonic. It can also stimulate the blood flow through the kidneys which can help with some types of kidney disease.

- Anti-catarrhal

Cayenne can be used to help loosen or relieve catarrh

- Anti-microbial

Cayenne also has some effect in combating viruses

Veterinary indications

- To stimulate the circulation
- Poor appetite and digestion
- Colic and flatulence
- Kidney disease

CHAMOMILE

Anthemis nobilis

Background

Chamomile is one of the herbs most commonly found in herb gardens due to its well tried and tested medicinal actions. Its effects were known at the time of the Egyptians and having stood the test of time, it is still in use today. It is a low growing plant which trails or creeps and which has a feathery appearance. It flowers towards the end of summer producing distinctive blooms with white petals and yellow centres like miniature daisies. The plant is very aromatic with a distinct apple like aroma. It is generally used as a sedative where it can be combined with other herbs. It is also excellent for the digestion where it will help with gastritis, indigestion, gastric ulcers, flatulence, diarrhoea and colitis.

Parts used

Flowers and leaves

Constituents

- Volatile oil including chamazulene and isadol
- Mucilage
- Coumarin
- Glycosides

Medicinal actions

- Anti-spasmodic

Chamomile can help ease cramping and spasm, especially where it is related to the digestive system.

- Carminative

The volatile oil in Chamomile can help stimulate the bowel and promote the process of digestion whilst at the same time help prevent gas from building up and causing discomfort.

- Analgesic

Chamomile has an effect in helping to relieve pain.

- Anti-inflammatory

Chamomile can also help reduce inflammation and relieve swelling and discomfort.

- Nervine & sedative

The action of chamomile on the nervous system is tone, strengthen and calm thereby relieving stress and the symptoms associated with this problem.

Combinations

Chamomile combines well with other calming herbs such as Valerian, Skullcap and Vervain.

Veterinary indications

- Anxiety, nervousness, excitability
- Stress related conditions
- Indigestion and colic
- Flatulence
- Gastritis
- Colitis including that of nervous origin
- Gastric ulcers

DANDELION

Taraxacum officinale

Background

Considered by many as no more than a common weed in Britain, dandelion is in fact one of our oldest and safest medicinal herbs. Easily recognisable by its bright yellow flowers and jagged, toothed leaves, dandelion tends to be found growing in gardens, grassland and on waste ground. Its name is derived from a corruption of the French "dent de lion" meaning lion's tooth after the appearance of the edges of the leaves. The leaves are sometimes included in salads, whilst the roots can be dried, roasted, and ground up and used as a substitute for coffee. In the past, the juice pressed from the stalks or leaves was used externally as a treatment for warts.

Parts used

All parts of the plant can be used medicinally, although the roots are the most active pharmacologically.

Constituents

- Glycosides
- Triterpenoid bitter compounds
- Sterols
- Choline and Inulin
- Potassium

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

Dandelion is a powerful diuretic an action which has given rise to various colloquial names including the French "pis en lit" or "wets the bed". It is also an excellent source of potassium which makes dandelion an ideal remedy to use in cases of ascites (where there are either heart problems or liver problems) and in treating pulmonary congestion due to cardiac disease. It is a useful remedy to use where kidney disease is present as it will help eliminate toxins and other breakdown products through its diuretic effect. Herbalists often use the leaves in preference to the root, as they appear to have the greatest diuretic action.

- Bitter

The bitter compounds in dandelion can stimulate the appetite and can improve the digestion. This is an effect that can be put to good use in cases where the appetite is generally poor or where an animal is a picky eater.

- Hepatic

Hepatics stimulate liver function and can be used to help treat liver disease in all species. This includes providing support for the liver in cases of jaundice, congestion, hepatitis and poisoning. The root has the strongest hepatic properties.

- Cholagogues

Cholagogues, like Dandelion, stimulate bile production and are useful in treating liver disease, especially conditions like congestive jaundice. Increasing the flow of bile also has the effect of improving the digestion and appetite. Dandelion is also able to help where periodic vomiting of bile is a problem.

- Laxative

Dandelion is a mild laxative and can be used to treat constipation. This action is brought about by promoting bile production from the liver and consequently stimulating peristalsis.

- Anti-rheumatic

Through its action as a diuretic, dandelion is able to help remove toxins from the body, relieving the symptoms associated with muscular rheumatism. Dandelion is also said to be useful in treating some forms of arthritis.

- Tonic

Due to its multiple actions, dandelion is generally regarded as a tonic to the body as a whole. This effect is partly due to its action in removing toxins through the kidneys and in part to its stimulatory effects on the liver and bile production. It is a good general tonic herb to give to elderly animals.

Combinations

Dandelion is often combined with other herbs such as Hawthorn in the treatment of ascites and pulmonary congestion, Berberis and Milk thistle in the treatment of liver disease and Nettles and Garlic as general tonics.

Veterinary indications:

- Liver disease including jaundice
- Ascites
- Cholecystitis
- Constipation
- Poor appetite
- Rheumatism
- Certain skin problems

Available in

Denes Milk Thistle+ Powder

ELDER

Sambucus nigra

Background

Elderberry is deciduous shrub with arched branches and deeply furrowed bark. It is native to Europe and grows throughout the UK. It is easily recognised with its creamy white flowers in spring and drooping branches of dark berries in the autumn. Its name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word “ellaern” or “aeld” meaning to kindle the fire as its hollowed stems were once used to help get fires going. Elderberry is surrounded by folklore and has consequently acquired many uses. The bruised leaves smell unpleasant and offensive to insects and were used by gardeners to deter aphids and caterpillars. The bark and young shoots were once used as a cure for foot rot in sheep and elderflower ointment was used to treat wounded horses during the First World War. Today elderflower ointment is used to treat chilblains and chapped skin. All parts of the plant have been used either medicinally or cosmetically at one time or another. These days medicinal use is largely limited to the flowers and berries.

Parts used

Berries, flowers, (bark, leaves)

Constituents

Flowers

- Flavonoids including rutin
- Glycosides
- Tannins
- Essential oil
- Mucilage

Berries

- Invert sugar and fruit acids
- Tannins
- Anthocyanins
- Vitamin C
- Rutin
- Essential oil

Medicinal actions

Flowers

- Anti-catarrhal

One of the principle uses for Elderflowers is in the treatment of respiratory conditions where there is a degree of catarrh present. Elderflowers will help reduce and loosen up sticky mucus. They will also help prevent hay fever.

- Diaphoretic

Herbs with diaphoretic properties will help reduce fever by inducing sweating.

Berries

The berries which are high in iron have much the same properties as the flowers with the addition of the following:

- Diuretic

The berries have a mild diuretic action and will help cleanse the body of toxins.

- Laxative

Elderberry is mildly laxative.

Combinations

Elderberry is often combined by herbalists with Peppermint and Yarrow in the treatment of colds and fevers. In cases of catarrh it can be used with Golden Rod and in hay fever it can be combined with Eyebright.

Veterinary indications

- Catarrh and Respiratory infections
- Anaemia
- Poor coat and skin pigmentation

EUCALYPTUS

Eucalyptus globulus

Background

There are over 700 species of Eucalyptus, but it is the “Blue gum” variety from Australia that is most often used medicinally. The most common association with Eucalyptus is in conjunction with aromatherapy where it is well known for its antiseptic action and for its use in treating respiratory conditions. It is also has strong anti-viral and immune stimulating properties as well as an antiseptic action on the urinary system. In the past it was used to treat "influenza" in horses, distemper in dogs and as a general remedy in septicaemia. It is a traditional household remedy in Australia frequently used for coughs, fevers and skin problems. It can be used internally in very small amounts.

Parts used

Essential oil derived from the leaves

Constituents

Essential oil

Medicinal actions

- Stimulant

Eucalyptus acts as a general stimulant, helping to support physiological functions.

- Antiseptic

Eucalyptus has a powerful antiseptic action and will help combat bacterial and viral infections. It also helps to stimulate the immune system. Used locally it can be used on cuts, abrasions and burns where it will ease the pain and stimulate healing.

- Anti-fungal

Used externally Eucalyptus can be used to help treat ringworm.

- Expectorant

Eucalyptus can be used to help treat coughs, respiratory infections, bronchitis and sinusitis.

- Diuretic

The diuretic action of Eucalyptus leads to an increase in the output of urine. Combined with the antiseptic effect, this makes it an effective treatment for urinary tract problems such as cystitis.

Combinations

Eucalyptus combines with other herbs such as Kava kava and Barberry to help resolve urinary tract problems.

Veterinary indications

- Urinary tract infections
- Ringworm (when used externally)
- Respiratory tract problems (when used externally)

GARLIC

Allium sativum

Background

Originating from India or Central Asia, garlic has long been used in cooking and as a medicinal herb. Introduced into the UK by the Romans, garlic has become one of the best known of all herbs. Its name is derived from the Anglo Saxon word “garleac” meaning spear and the word “leac” meaning leek, supposedly referring to garlic resembling a leek with spearheaded like cloves.

Garlic is one of the few herbs that has gained universal recognition and used both medicinally and in cooking. It was once used as a food by the Egyptians and during the first and second world wars, garlic was applied to infected wounds to help stop the spread of the infection and gangrene developing. It is also one of the herbs that has been extensively researched to determine its mode of action and how it can help resolve many common everyday health problems. One of its main constituents is a compound known as alliin which breaks down (when the cells are disrupted) into a pungent compound known as allicin which is active medicinally. Garlic also contains other compounds known as diallyl disulphides.

Parts used

Bulb

Constituents

- Volatile oils
- Alliin
- Mucilage
- Germanium
- Glucokinins
- Amino acids
- Vitamins A, B & C

Medicinal actions

- Antiseptic

Garlic can help ward off infections and assists the body to fight off existing problems

- Anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal

The volatile oil in garlic and one of its the prime constituents known as alliin, have a marked antibacterial and anti-viral action which can be put to use in dealing with many common problems. Applied externally garlic can be used to help treat ringworm.

- Cholagogues

Garlic can assist the digestion by promoting the flow of bile.

- Hypotensive

One of the more recent findings is that Garlic can help reduce blood pressure when given over a period of time. This is a useful property that can be put to use in helping dogs with cardiac problems and cats with kidney disease where raised blood pressure can lead to renal damage.

- Anti-spasmodic

Garlic has a mild antispasmodic effect and can help reduce the discomfort associated with indigestion.

- Anthelmintic

Herbal remedies with anthelmintic properties can deter or help expel worms from the bowel. In reality, garlic acts as a deterrent and will help to ward of worm infestation if given on a regular basis.

- Anti-catarrhal

This is an important property and can be put to good use in treating sinusitis, rhinitis and respiratory infections where catarrh is a feature.

- Carminative

This effect will support the digestion by stimulating peristalsis and will consequently reduce the chances of gas build up in the bowel.

- Expectorant

The pungent volatile oil present in garlic is for the most part excreted through the lungs. As such, garlic is an excellent remedy for treating respiratory problems such as bronchitis, rhinitis, sinusitis, viral and bacterial respiratory infections. It is also useful in treating some forms of allergic based respiratory conditions such as feline asthma and COPD in horses.

- Tonic

Garlic can be given on a daily basis to help support the immune system and to help prevent infections.

- Other actions

Garlic has an effect on the bacteria in the bowel. Whilst it supports the growth of friendly bacteria, it helps kill pathogenic bacteria and can help re-establish the balance of normal bacteria within the bowel. Garlic has also been shown to help reduce blood cholesterol levels and to help lower blood glucose levels in cases of diabetes.

Combinations

Given on a daily basis, garlic can be combined with other Denes products, such as Denes Greenleaf Tablets, to help maintain good health.

Veterinary indications

- Bacterial, viral and fungal infections
- Respiratory conditions such as sinusitis, rhinitis, bronchitis, catarrh
- To deter parasites including fleas and worms
- To support the growth of the normal gut flora
- To support the immune system
- In the management of diabetes, heart and kidney conditions

Available in

Respiratory support

GENTIAN

Gentiana lutea

Background

As an ornamental garden plant, Gentian is not native to the UK. In many areas of the world it is a protected species having been over collected in the past for its roots which were used to make bitter liqueurs. It is now grown commercially in the USA and Eastern Europe.

Gentian is a perennial herb with a thick root, golden yellow flowers and bluish green leaves. Its name is derived from Gentius, King of Illyria, who is reputed to be the first to use the plant medicinally. Gentian is regarded as one of the best herbal tonics available.

Parts used

The root from older plants.

Constituents

- Bitter glycosides
- A flavonoid derivative
- Alkaloids
- Pectin
- Tannin
- Mucilage
- Sugars

Medicinal actions

- Bitter tonic

Gentian has a marked influence on the digestive system stimulating the appetite and the digestion in general. This includes increasing the production of saliva, gastric juices and bile. Gentian can help with poor appetite, sluggish digestion, indigestion and flatulence.

- Sialagogue

As a sialagogue, Gentian can increase the production of saliva and will support the digestion.

- Cholagogues

Through its bitter action, Gentian can help increase the production of bile which in turn will stimulate peristalsis.

- Hepatic

Gentian is a general tonic for the liver.

Combinations

Gentian is often combined with other herbs where a general tonic effect is needed.

Veterinary indications

- As a general tonic
- Lack of appetite
- Sluggish digestion
- Indigestion
- Flatulence
- To stimulate the liver

GINGER

Zingiber officinale

Background

Ginger is famous not only a culinary ingredient, but also as a medicinal herb. It is widely cultivated in the West Indies, Jamaica and Africa. The root is dug up when the leaves appear to have dried. The stem and root fibres are then removed and it is left to dry. Ginger is well known as a stimulant, particularly of the circulation, where it has been used to help with poor circulation and cramping. It also acts on the bowel where its carminative properties promote the flow of gastric juices. It will also help allay flatulence and colic.

Parts used

Root

Constituents

- Volatile oil

- Mucilage
- Resin

Medicinal actions

- Stimulant

Promoting the flow of blood generally and especially to the periphery of the body

- Carminative

Ginger can be used to help treat colic, settle indigestion, reduce flatulence and to promote the flow of digestive juices

- Sialagogue

By promoting the flow of saliva, Ginger can promote the process of digestion

- Anti-emetic

Ginger can help reduce the feeling of nausea which accompanies travel sickness and bouts of vomiting

- Diaphoretic

Ginger can relive fever by promoting sweating

Combinations

Ginger combines well with other herbs which act on the digestive system such as Marshmallow root and Peppermint.

Veterinary indications

- Flatulence
- Colic
- Indigestion
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Poor circulation

Available in

Denes Digestion

HOPS

Humulus lupulus

Background

Hops are traditionally associated with beer but they have been used in medicine for at least as long as in brewing. This perennial remedy is commonly found in hedgerows widely over Europe which and has a tendency to climb and wind around willow and other trees. This led Pliny to refer to the plant as "willow wolf" from which it gained its Latin name lupulus meaning wolf.

Parts used

Flowers

Constituents

- Lupulin
- Bitters
- An oestrogenic like substance
- Resin
- Volatile oil
- Tannin

Medicinal actions

- Sedative

Hops have a sedative action on the body and will relax the nervous system.
Consequently they can help with anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, over-excitement and tension.

- Nervine

Plants with nervine type properties will provide general support to the nervous system and will tone it generally. Hops can be used to help with a wide variety of nervous system related problems, even those of long-standing.

- Astringent

Astringent herbs will tone and firm up tissues as they contain tannins. This useful property means that hops can be used to treat conditions such as colitis associated with stress on the nervous system.

- Appetite stimulant

Hops contain compounds called bitters which can stimulate the appetite and the flow of digestive juices.

Combinations

Hops are commonly combined with other herbs:

With Valerian and Skullcap in the treatment of anxiety.
With Valerian and Passionflower for insomnia.

Veterinary indications

- Anxiety, including separation anxiety
- Restlessness
- Over-excitement
- Insomnia and night time pacing
- Colitis where there is an underlying nervous cause
- Appetite stimulation

JUNIPER

Juniperis communis

Background

The essential oil extracted from Juniper has been used medicinally for many centuries. It was first used by the ancient Greeks to help avoid the spread of disease. Even during the First World War it was used for the same problem in hospitals. The best oil is distilled from the ripe berries which are collected in the Autumn and slowly dried in the shade.

The first veterinary use of Juniper was to help prevent irritation from flies where it was mixed with lard and applied to the skin. Older veterinary textbooks detail the diuretic action of Juniper in assisting kidney function as well as its other expectorant and carminative properties. The oil has many additional attributes especially when used externally; internal use is restricted to very small amounts as large quantities can be damaging. The oil is physically and emotionally cleansing and helps the body remove toxins and waste products. It has a very beneficial effect on the urinary tract.

Parts used

Essential oil extracted from the berries.

Constituents

- Essential oil
- Glycosides
- Resin
- Tannin
- Organic acids

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

By increasing urinary output, Juniper helps remove waste products and toxins from the body.

- Antiseptic

As an antiseptic, Juniper will help combat bacterial and viral infections. In combination with its action on the urinary system, Juniper is an effective treatment for cystitis and other urinary tract problems such as nephritis.

- Carminative

Juniper helps stimulate the digestive system and will ease any discomfort associated by colic and build-up of gas.

- Expectorant

As an expectorant, Juniper will help loosen any build-up of catarrh or mucus.

- Anti-rheumatic

By cleansing toxins from the body, Juniper will help remove the waste products that contribute to stiff muscles and joints.

Combinations

Juniper can be combined with other herbal remedies such as Buchu and Uva ursi to help treat urinary tract problems such as cystitis.

Veterinary indications

- Cystitis
- Flatulent colic (external use)
- Rheumatism (external use)
- Bronchitis and similar respiratory problems (external use)

LIQUORICE

Glycyrrhiza glabra

Background

Liquorice is an ancient perennial herb whose properties were known to the Assyrians and Egyptians. Now widely cultivated now for medicinal and commercial use, it is native to Southern Europe as well as Western and Central Asia. It was once grown in the UK in the Pontefract region of Yorkshire but today all supplies of liquorice in the UK are imported. The earliest reported veterinary use dates back to the 17th century.

As a herbal remedy, it has a wide number of applications and one of a small number of herbs which have an action upon the endocrine system. This is chiefly because some of its

constituents have chemical structures which resemble the natural steroids found in the body.

Parts used

Dried root

Constituents

- Glycyrrhizin and glycyrrhizin acid (glycosides)
- Saponins
- Flavonoids
- Volatile oil
- Coumarins
- Asparagine
- Oestrogenic like substances
- Essential oil
- Tannins

Medicinal actions

- Expectorant

Liquorice is commonly used to help treat respiratory problems. As an expectorant it will help loosen bronchial secretions and is of great value in treating catarrh, coughs and bronchitis.

- Laxative

The mild laxative properties of liquorice make it an ideal remedy to help with some types of constipation.

- Anti-spasmodic

Liquorice can be used in the treatment and prevention of abdominal colic where it is of benefit in helping to relieve pain.

- Demulcent

One of the main uses of liquorice is in treating stomach ulceration due to its action as a demulcent. This effect can be put to good use along the length of the digestive tract making this remedy of use in treating vomiting (gastritis), colitis and some forms of diarrhoea. Liquorice is also reputed to lower stomach ph.

Veterinary indications

- Coughs
- Bronchitis
- Catarrh
- Vomiting
- Gastritis
- Colitis
- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal colic
- Mild constipation

Available in

Denes Digestion

MARSHMALLOW

Althaea officinalis

Background

Marshmallow is a native plant and commonly found near the sea and in salty marshland areas. It is easily recognisable by its white or pinkish flowers and soft, velvety leaves. Its common name is Mallow, derived from the Latin “malva” or the Greek “malacos” meaning soft. This relates to the softening and healing properties of the group of plants as a whole known as the Malvaceae of which Marshmallow is a member.

Marshmallow has long been cultivated for culinary, ornamental and medicinal reasons. It is one of the most important medicinal herbs as it contains a very high level of mucilage (making Marshmallow an excellent demulcent) which can be put to good use therapeutically in a number of situations.

Parts used

Root and leaves

Constituents

Root

- Mucilage
- Tannins
- Pectin
- Asparagine

Leaves

- Mucilage

Medicinal actions

Root

- Demulcent

This is without doubt the most important property of Marshmallow. The high levels of mucilage ensure that it will soothe and protect inflamed mucus membranes. Marshmallow root is an ideal remedy to use in the treatment of diarrhoea and colitis.

- Emollient

Used on the skin, Marshmallow will soothe and heal sore or ulcerated areas.

- Vulnerary

Marshmallow will stimulate healing both internally and also when used externally.

Leaves

- Demulcent

The leaves also contain high levels of mucilage and are best suited to treating chest problems such as bronchitis and coughs and urinary problems such as urethritis and cystitis.

- Expectorant

Like other expectorants, Marshmallow will help loosen sticky catarrh clogging up the respiratory tract.

- Emollient

Used externally, Marshmallow leaf will help soften, soothe and protect the skin.

- Anti-catarrhal

Marshmallow leaves help the body to remove excess mucus and catarrh

Combinations

Marshmallow root combines well with Agrimony and Liquorice to help treat diarrhoea and colitis.

Veterinary indications

Root

- Diarrhoea
- Colitis

Leaves

- Coughs
- Bronchitis
- Catarrh
- Cystitis & Urethritis

Available in

Denes Digestion

MILK THISTLE

Silybum marianum

Background

Milk thistle, which is known by several other names including Silymarin, St Mary's thistle and Holy thistle, is a tall prickly plant which is native to the Mediterranean region but which now grows worldwide. Growing up to a maximum height of 10 feet, it has wide leaves which have white veins or blotches. The flowers are reddish-purple in colour and produce hard skinned fruits which contain seeds that look very similar to sunflower seeds. The seeds contain the medicinally active part of the plant and are frequently used to help both liver and gall bladder problems. In the past however, as its name might suggest, the plant was also used to promote the production of milk in breastfeeding mothers.

Parts used

Seeds

Constituents

- Silybin
- Silydianin
- Silychristin
- Flavones
- Essential oil
- Bitter principle
- Mucilage

Medicinal actions

Milk thistle is an excellent remedy for stimulating the production of bile and assisting the process of digestion. It is also indicated in the treatment of cholecystitis

- Hepatic & Cholagogues

Milk thistle acts primarily on the liver and the gall bladder. It can be used to help with hepatitis (inflammation of the liver), cirrhosis (fibrosis) of the liver and inflammation of the gallbladder (cholecystitis) as well as stimulating the production of bile. It is also thought to protect the liver from the damaging effect of poisons and toxins as well as helping to regenerate damaged cells. Other research has shown that it may have some action in lowering cholesterol levels

- Galactagogue

As its name suggests, Milk Thistle can be sued to increase the production of milk in nursing mothers or other mammals

Combinations

Milk Thistle combines well with Dandelion in the treatment of liver problems and with Fringe tree bark for helping with gall bladder problems.

Veterinary indications

- Liver disease in general especially hepatitis
- Cholecystitis
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Poisoning
- Poor appetite
- Where there is a low tolerance of dietary fats
- May be of benefit in reducing the growth of cancer cells in certain types of cancers.

Available in

Denes Liver support

NETTLES

Urtica dioica - Greater nettle
Urtica urens - Lesser nettle

Background

There can be few people that are not familiar with the common stinging nettle. It can be found universally, growing wherever the land has been disturbed. Distributed throughout Europe, it is found also in Japan, Asia, South Africa and in the Andes. It has finely toothed leaves which taper to a point and small flowers which swing from the leaves. Nettles flower from June to September and can grow to a height of around 3 feet. Its roots creep underground so that eradication is very difficult. The most familiar aspect of the plant though, is its sting which can be antidoted by the juice of the common Dock. The two plants are often found growing in close proximity. Oddly enough the juice of the nettle plant will also relieve the discomfort of the sting.

In the past nettles have been used to make cloth, puddings and beer. Nettle beer was once made by country folk to relieve gout and rheumatism, an early indication of its potential as an herbal remedy in treating joint problems. Flogging with nettles was also reputed to help relieve rheumatism and increase the strength of the limbs. Young nettles were traditionally picked in the spring as the basis of a tonic for "spring cleaning" after the long dark days of winter. Hence the remedy gained a reputation as an excellent purifier for the blood. We would now recognise this action as detoxification.

Parts used

The leaves and sometimes the root of the plant are used medicinally.

Constituents

- Formic acid
- Mucilage
- Histamine
- Iron
- Vitamin C
- Tannins
- Mineral salts (including silica, potassium, manganese and sulphur)

Medicinal actions

- Astringent

Astringent herbs help tone and strengthen tissues and as such nettles can be used to help reduce the risk of haemorrhage including uterine haemorrhage and nosebleeds.

- Diuretic

Nettles have a mild diuretic effect and can increase the output of urine through the kidneys. This action has a cleansing effect on the body, helping to remove toxins, unwanted metabolites and poisons. Removal of these undesirable substances accounts for some of the other useful effects of nettles, including the use of the remedy in the treatment of dermatitis, eczema, arthritis, rheumatism. Nettles can also be used in the prevention and treatment of bladder stones and gravel (urolithiasis) as well as flushing out the waste products that accumulate in kidney disease.

- Tonic

Due to the cleansing nature of nettles and their high vitamin and mineral content, nettles are considered a good general tonic to help strengthen the body. Used over a period of time they will improve the quality and appearance of the hair and coat. Due to the high iron content of nettles, they can be used to help treat cases of anaemia, including where kidney disease is present.

- Anti-histaminic

Nettles have a mild action as an anti-histamine and can help reduce itching and irritation when used both externally (as a tea or lotion) and when taken internally.

- Lowers blood sugar

In combination with other herbal remedies, nettles can be used to help lower blood sugar in cases of diabetes.

Combinations

With Garlic as a general tonic and in the treatment of diabetes.
With Berberis and Buchu in the management of urolithiasis.
With Burdock and Calendula in the treatment of eczema.

Veterinary indications:

- Arthritis and rheumatism
- Eczema and dermatitis, poor coat and skin
- Atopy
- Chronic renal failure
- Diabetes
- Bladder stones and gravel (urolithiasis)
- Anaemia

Available in

Denes Skin & Urinary

PARSLEY

Petroselinum crispum

Background

Parsley is a biennial herb native to the Mediterranean region and cultivated in several varieties, including in the UK, where the curly leafed variety is preferred. It also grows wild in Britain, usually on wasteland. Well known in culinary spheres, its medicinal use dates back to Greek times. Its generic name is derived from the Greek word “Petroselinum” meaning rock celery. Its medicinal action is mainly due to its essential oil which gives Parsley some important medicinal actions.

Parts used

Roots, leaves and seeds

Constituents

- Essential oil which includes apiol, myristicin and pinene
- Vitamin C
- A Glycoside
- Apiin
- Starch

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

Parsley has a strong diuretic effect and can be used to help remove excess fluid and to increase urine output. This last action can help with some kidney and bladder problems by flushing away debris and waste products. As it also removes toxins, Parsley is sometimes used to help with arthritis and halitosis.

- Carminative

As an effective carminative, Parsley will help relieve the symptoms of flatulence and the associated discomfort caused by colic.

- Expectorant

The volatile oil in Parsley will help loosen catarrh and ease coughing.

- Emmenagogue

Parsley will help regulate the bleeding which occurs during oestrus.

- Tonic

Small doses of Parsley stimulate the appetite and promote good digestion.

Combinations

None specifically.

Veterinary indications

- Colic and indigestion
- Flatulence
- To promote appetite and digestion
- Kidney failure
- Bladder stones and gravel, FLUTD
- Joint stiffness

PARSLEY PIERT

Aphanes arvensis

Background

This small, delicate little plant is common in Great Britain, especially in areas where the soil is dry. It is also found fields, on waste land and growing on the top of walls. It has a good reputation amongst herbalists as an effective remedy for treating bladder stones and gravel and hence its colloquial countryside names which include Parsley Breakstone and Parsley Piercestone.

Parts used

Ariel parts.

Constituents

- Tannins

Medicinal actions

- Diuretic

This remedy has a potent diuretic action and will help prevent the formation of gravel or stones in the bladder. It can also be used in the treatment of existing problems to help remove stones and debris. Parsley piert should also be considered in cases of kidney disease where it will encourage the removal of the waste products which build up in such cases. It can also help where there is fluid retention due to liver or kidney problems.

- Demulcent

Parsley piert has a soothing effect on the mucus membranes lining the walls of the urinary tract and will help reduce inflammation and encourage healing. It is a particularly good remedy to use where there is a degree of pain present.

- Anti-lithic

Parsley piert is an excellent remedy to use in cases of urolithiasis as it will help prevent problems occurring as well as helping to treat existing cases.

Combinations
With Buchu and Bearberry in the treatment of urinary problems.

Veterinary indications

- Bladder stones and gravel, FLUTD, urolithiasis
- Kidney disease
- Cystitis

PEPPERMINT

Mentha x piperita

Background

Species of mint are found widely throughout Europe and cultivated extensively for culinary use, as a source of peppermint oil and for the pharmaceutical industry. Peppermint is a perennial herb with dark green leaves and small reddish-violet flowers which are produced between July and September. Mint spreads easily by means of underground shoots which spread from the main roots. It is a plant which rarely produces seeds. All parts of the plant smell and taste of peppermint but it is the leaves which are used commercially. Peppermint is one of the most widely used herbal remedies both internally and externally.

Parts used

Aerial parts

Constituents

- Volatile oil containing menthol, menthone, jasmone
- Tannins
- Bitter principle

Medicinal actions

- Carminative

This is the most important action of peppermint as it is one of the best carminative herbs available. It can be used to help relieve gut spasm by relaxing visceral muscle and will allay build-up of gas and the discomfort that this causes. It is an ideal remedy to help with most types of colic.

- Anti-spasmodic

Peppermint soothes and relaxes the bowel and has anti-spasmodic properties which helps to relieve the pains associated with colic.

- Cholagogues

By stimulating the digestion through increasing the production of bile, peppermint can be used to improve the digestion and stimulate the appetite.

- Aromatic

Aromatic herbs have a strong flavour or odour and are often used to stimulate the digestion.

- Anti-emetic

The essential oil in peppermint acts to soothe the stomach lining, effectively acting as a mild anaesthetic. It can be used to help stop sickness and nausea.

- Analgesic

Again this is due to the essential oil in peppermint which effectively has a mild pain killing effect. As such it can relieve some of the discomfort associated with sickness, colic and colitis.

- Antimicrobial

Peppermint has a mild antimicrobial action and will help prevent abnormal fermentation in the stomach.

- Stimulant

In general peppermint is a mild stimulant and will help enhance the body's physiological functions.

- Nervine

Like other nervines, Peppermint can help calm and reduce anxiety and tension.

Veterinary indications

- Nausea, vomiting, sickness, gastritis and travel sickness
- Colic and Indigestion
- Colitis
- Flatulence
- To stimulate appetite and the digestion

Available in

Denes Digestion Powder

Kittening & Whelping

Rubus idaeus

Background

The raspberry is a familiar deciduous shrub which grows both in the wild and under cultivation. It has a woody stem with small thorns and serrated leaves which have a glossy green colour above and white felted appearance below. Flowering between June and August, it produces white flowers and then the familiar red fruits which we all enjoy.

Parts used

Leaves

Constituents

- Volatile oil • Tannins
- Fruit sugar
- Pectin
- Vitamin C
- Malic acid
- Organic acids
- Compounds which have oxytocin like properties

Medicinal actions

- Astringent

Raspberry leaves have a valuable astringent due to the tannin content which will help tone tissues. As such raspberry leaves are used in herbal medicine to help treat diarrhoea and to help check haemorrhage during and after parturition.

- Parturient

Parturient herbs will help ease the process of parturition by toning the smooth muscle of the uterus thereby assisting the birth process by improving the strength and quality of the contractions.

- Emmenagogue

Herbs classified as emmenogogues act on the female reproductive system and help to restore the balance to the system especially in relation to the bleeding that occurs during

oestrus. One of the minor indications for raspberry leaves is to help ease the symptoms of false pregnancy in the bitch.

- Tonic

Raspberry leaves are considered a tonic to the whole of the female reproductive tract.

Combinations

None specifically

Veterinary indications

- To strengthen and tone the female reproductive tract
- To increase the strength of contractions and ease birth
- To limit post-partum haemorrhage
- False pregnancy in the bitch

Available in

Denes Kittening & Whelping

SEAWEED

Fucus vesiculosus

Background

Most of us are familiar with the thick, tough, leathery, greenish-brown fronds of Seaweed lying on the beach easily distinguished by its small air vesicles and thick stout stems. It is gathered each year during early summer and dried in the sun. Seaweed, which is also referred to as Bladderwrack or Kelp, has a wide number of medicinal and other uses. It has a number of veterinary uses which are well documented including in the treatment of skin conditions, poor hair growth, poor coat and skin pigmentation, obesity, hypothyroidism and anaemia. It is considered as a good general tonic for old age. Other than medicinal use, Seaweed is a source of alginates, a type of thickener used in the food industry.

Parts used

Whole plant.

Constituents

- Mucilage (Algin)
- Mannitol
- Volatile oil
- Carotene
- Cellulose
- Iodine
- Bromine
- Sodium
- Potassium
- A wide range of other vitamins, minerals and trace elements

Medicinal actions

- Thyroid stimulant

Due to its iodine content, seaweed is stimulates the thyroid gland. It can be used to help treat hypothyroidism and the obesity often associated with this condition.

- Anti-rheumatic

Seaweed can help to delay the progress of arthritis and can be used to treat rheumatism as well.

- Alterative

Alteratives help restore normal function to the body and will increase both health and general vitality. Herbs in this category, such as Seaweed, were once considered blood cleansers. Older animals can benefit from seaweed as a general tonic.

Combinations

Seaweed is combined with Elderberry, Watercress, Parsley and Wheatgerm oil in Denes All-in-One Tablets.

Veterinary indications

- Hypothyroidism
- Obesity
- Poor coat and Skin
- Dry Skin
- Poor coat and skin pigmentation
- Arthritis and rheumatism
- Anaemia

Available in

Denes complete health care

SKULLCAP

Scutellaria laterfolia

Background

Skullcap grows wild in Europe, preferring areas close to rivers and where it can receive maximum sunshine. It is more common in England than Scotland and is scattered locally in Ireland. It has earned many common colloquial names including the Helmet Flower, Hood wort, Quaker Bonnet, and perhaps the most relevant, Mad Dog Weed or Mad weed suggesting its role in treating mania and hysteria.

Parts used

Ariel parts

Constituents

- Scutellarin and scutellarein (flavonoid glycosides)
- Volatile oil
- Bitter compound
- Tannin

Medicinal actions

- Nervine

Like all nervine herbs, Skullcap provides general support for the nervous system acting to strengthen and calm the system.

- Sedative

Skullcap has a powerful calming action which is useful in treating anxiety, hysteria, mania and excitability. By its action on the general nervous system, it can be used to help treat some forms of epilepsy, especially if combined with other herbal remedies.

- Anti-spasmodic

The calming properties of skullcap extend to other areas of the body and particularly to the bowel where it can be used to ease colic by relaxing the muscles of the gut. Skullcap is best suited to treating colic associated with nervous tension.

- Analgesic

Skullcap has some mild analgesic, pain relieving qualities.

Combinations

With Valerian and Hops in the treatment of conditions linked to the nervous system.

Veterinary indications

- Anxiety
- Hysteria
- Manic behaviour
- Excitability
- Epilepsy
- Colic
- As an adjunct to the control of pain in anxious animals

Available in

Denes Tranquil & Calm

VALERIAN

Valeriana officinalis

Background

Valerian is a perennial plant native to Europe which has an extensive and large root system. It grows in rough grassy areas where the soil is damp. Its actual name is derived from the Latin valere which means to be healthy and may have originated from Valerius, an ancient herbalist who used it medicinally. One other alternative suggestion is that it is named after the Roman province of Valeria.

Valerian is a valuable herb and has been used throughout history for its calming effects on the nervous system. In the middle ages it was used to treat some types of epilepsy. The actual plant or dried herb is very attractive to cats which are drawn to it by its scent. The value of valerian as a sedative is backed by its inclusion in many pharmacopoeias.

Parts used

Roots and Rhizome

Constituents

- Essential oil including valerianic acid, isovalerianic acid borneol, pinene, camphene
- Alkaloids
- Bitter compounds
- Tannins
- Resins

Medicinal actions

- Nervine

As a relaxing nervine, valerian has a calming effect on the nervous system, whilst at the same time toning and strengthening it.

- Carminative

Valerian also has an effect on the bowel and will help dispel and prevent any gas build up by stimulating peristalsis.

- Sedative

This is one of the main properties of valerian. It can be used successfully to reduce tension and anxiety, restlessness, excitability, hysteria and panic. It can also be used to help treat some types of epilepsy.

- Hypnotic

Hypnotics will help induce sleep and can be used to help animals that pace around at night.

- Anti-spasmodic

Valerian is an ideal remedy to help relieve pain. This can be the pain associated with colic or indigestion, or the pain linked with back problems or tension.

Combinations

Valerian combines well with Skullcap and Hops in the treatment of problems linked with the nervous system.

Veterinary indications

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Fear related problems e.g. thunder and fireworks
- Hysteria and excitability
- Management of epilepsy
- Insomnia
- Some behavioural problems
- Colic and indigestion
- Back pain

Available in

Denes Tranquil & Calm

VERVAIN

Verbena officinalis

Background

Vervain grows in the UK as well as in China and Japan. It has several names but it is commonly known here as the Herb of Grace. It prefers sunny areas and is found by roadsides and in pasture. The Romans used Vervain as an alter plant and the druids made use of it in their potions and ceremonies. It was once listed as useful in treating upward of thirty complaints but it is now mainly used for its calming, sedative properties. It is useful in treating tension, stress, anxiety, depression, fits and excitability. In the past Vervain was also used to help with fevers and with liver problems including jaundice and gall bladder inflammation.

Parts used

Ariel parts

Constituents

- Bitter glycosides-verbenalin
- Essential oil
- Mucilage
- Tannin

Medicinal actions

- Nervine & Sedative

Vervain can help strengthen the nervous system as well as having a calming action. It can be used to relieve tension, stress, excitability, anxiety, hysteria and epilepsy

- Anti-spasmodic

Vervain along with Valerian and Chamomile can be used to help relieve spasms and cramps

- Hepatic

Although not often used now for this effect, Vervain can be used to support the liver

- Analgesic

The analgesic effect of Vervain will help to relieve pain.

Combinations

Vervain combines well with Skullcap and Valerian in the treatment of behavioural problems.

Veterinary indications

- Tension, stress
- Anxiety, depression
- Excitability, hysteria
- Epilepsy, fits

Available in

Denes Tranquil & Calm

WHEATGRASS

Triticum aestivum

Wheatgrass is derived from wheat plants, which are harvested early in growth when the green plant is only a few inches tall. The harvested plants contain a wide range of vitamins and nearly all of the minerals needed for good health as well as chlorophyll and a range of enzymes. The health benefits are varied and include cleansing the lymphatic system, acting as a blood tonic, removing toxins from cells and supporting the liver and kidneys. In particular, chlorophyll has a reputation as a healer and in supporting the immune system.

Available in

Denes Complete Health care

THERAPEUTIC INDEX – Herbal Remedies

A guide to common conditions and suggested Denes Products

Anaemia	Complete health care Powder, Skin & Urinary
Anxiety	Tranquil & Calm
Appetite-poor	Liver support, Tranquil & Clam Digestion
Arthritis	Skin & Urinary, Mobility, Complete health care
Ascites	Liver support
Back pain	Tranquil & Calm
Bacterial overgrowth	Respiratory support, Gut health
Bladder stones	Skin & Urinary, Bladder Support
Bronchitis	Respiratory support
Catarrh	Respiratory support
Cholecystitis	Liver support
Coat-poor	Complete health care
Colic	Tranquil & Clam, Digestion
Colitis	Gut health Powder, Tranquil & Calm, Digestion
Constipation	Liver support
Cystitis	Bladder Support
Debility	Liver support
Diarrhoea	Gut health Digestion
Diabetes	Respiratory support, Skin & Urinary
Digestion to stimulate	Digestion
Epilepsy	Tranquil & Clam
Excitement-over	Tranquil & Clam
Flatulence	Tranquil & Calm, Complete health, Digestion
Gastritis	Gut health, Digestion
Hypothyroidism	Complete health
Hysteria	Tranquil
Incontinence	Bladder Support
Indigestion	Gut health, Tranquil & Calm, Digestion
Infections	Respiratory support
Itching	Skin & Urinary
Insomnia	Tranquil & Calm
Kidney disease	Kidney Support, Skin & Urinary
Liver disease	Liver support
Nausea	Digestion
Obesity	Complete health
Prostatic enlargement	Bladder Support
Pigmentation-poor	Complete health
Restlessness	Tranquil & Clam
Rheumatism	Skin & Urinary
Sinusitis	Respiratory support
Travel sickness	Digestion
Urethritis	Bladder Support
Vaginitis	Bladder Support
Vomiting	Digestion
Vomiting-periodic	Liver support
Whelping, Kittening	Kittening & Whelping

THE DENES PRODUCT RANGE

Denes have marketed herbal remedies for both cats and dogs since 1951. The range includes licensed products to help with a variety of common problems including respiratory, liver and urinary conditions, arthritis, skin conditions as well as digestive problems such as diarrhoea, colitis and vomiting. Herbal remedies can also help support the immune system. Added to this, Denes also have a range of supplements and homeopathic remedies to improve general health and a number of external treatments based on aromatherapy oils.

SUPPLEMENTS

General supplements

- Respiratory
- Complete Health Care
- Kidney Support
- Bladder Support
- Digestion
- Liver support
- Tranquil & Calm
- Kittening & whelping
- Gut Health
- Mobility

AROMATHERAPY RANGE

- Hot Itch Lotion
- Ear Cleaner
- Liquid Garlic
- Skin Balm
- Mite Cream
- Essential Oil Shampoo

HOMEOPATHIC RANGE Liquid potencies, 15ml dropper bottles

- Arnica 30c
- Arsenicum album 30c
- Nux vomica 30c
- Rhus tox 30c
- Ruta grav 30c
- Sulphur 30c Unboxed
- Bryonia 30c
- Cantharis 30c
- Euphrasia 30c
- Fragaria 3c
- Hepar sulph 30c
- Phosphorus 30c
- Pulsatilla 30c
- Silica 30c
- Symphytum 30c

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