

PLANTAIN

Plantain, (*Plantago lanceolata* or *Plantago majoris*) is a herb often used in our tea mixes. Incredibly versatile, it has a wide range of properties making it useful for all seasons. It is native to the UK and can be found in most lawns (especially if it is full of weeds).



The broad leaves of common plantain, growing by the River Kelvin in Glasgow.

- **Anti-histamine:** reduces the body's allergic response in conditions such as hayfever.
- **Expectorant:** helps to thin mucous allowing it to drain away naturally; A helpful property for winter colds, hayfever and chest infections.
- **A rich mineral source:** high in potassium, phosphorus and magnesium, making it nutritious.
- **Demulcent:** soothing to the digestive system, and to the skin. It may be used externally as a wound healer (in Gaelic it was known as "the healing plant").

A place in history

Plantain (Common plantain) was known as "The Englishman's foot" by some native American tribes, as it used to spring up in the footsteps of settlers. The banana tree is also called the plantain tree due to its cluster of leaves resembling plantain.

Plantain in Poultices

As it has wound healing properties plantain can be used in a poultice. Poultices have been used for thousands of years and can be a very simple herbal remedy to make.

Instructions

Crush the plantain leaves and place in a cloth. Apply to wound!

(You could make an infusion and soak the cloth in the infusion prior to applying to the area. Allow to cool first).

How to use it –

Tea/Infusion – infuse one teaspoon to a cup in boiling water.

Herbal tincture – doses vary depending on size, age and health of an individual. An typical dose for plantain for a healthy adult could be 30 drops (1.5 ml) three times a day in a little water.

Capsules/tablets – as instructed on the packet.

Cautions and Contraindications – none identified.

P.S. A good herb to consider taking with plantain in a tea is nettle (*Urtica dioica*). This also has an antihistamine action and is a rich source of iron and vitamins. It taste nice too (we think)!

Contraindications & Precautions

The contents of this newsletter are for information and education purposes and to assist in the use of herbs. It is not intended to replace the advice of a professional.

ABOUT AMINO ACIDS

Amino acids are the building blocks of protein (the primary component of the body's cells), enzymes, antibodies and hormones. Because amino acids are required throughout the body they can be taken as a supplement for a large range of uses.

There are 24 amino acids of which 8 are considered "essential" (i.e. they must be consumed as food) and 14 are "non-essential" amino acids which the body can synthesise from the essential amino acids.

Amino acids are present in a wide range of foods; including meat, dairy and soy which are "essential" (or complete) sources of protein (contain all the essential amino acids). Incomplete sources such as nuts, seeds and beans can be combined to form a complete source (for example baked beans and brown bread form a complete source!).

Essential Amino Acids	Non-Essential Amino Acids
Isoleucine	Alanine
Leucine	Arginine
Lysine	Aspartic acid
Methionine	Carnitine
Phenylalanine	Cysteine
Threonine	Glutamic Acid
Tryptophan	Glutamine
Valine	Glycine
Histadine*	Homocysteine
Taurine*	Hydroproline
	Proline
	Serine
	Tyrosine

*Essential for infants

Amino acids can be taken in the form of a supplement (most commonly as a 500mg capsule). A few examples are given below, however there are many more uses.

Infertility

Amino acids can be used to treat both male (30% of cases) and female (40% of cases) infertility, as well as the remaining unexplained causes (40% of cases). Possible amino acids to use in male infertility include:

- Carnitine: helps provide fuel to the sperm, increasing "motility".
- Arginine: required for sperm production and supplementation has been shown to help increase sperm motility and sperm count.

(A number of other supplements that may be recommended include zinc, essential fatty acids and vitamin C. Lifestyle changes can also help).

Cold Sores (Herpes Simplex)

The balance between the amino acids lysine and arginine is known to affect the occurrence and severity of cold sores. Someone suffering from regular cold sores should take a lysine supplement and lower arginine intake (by reducing intake of certain foods including nuts, seeds and chocolate).

Mood, Concentration and Anxiety

A number of different amino acids can pass the blood/brain barrier and are involved in a wide range of brain functions. In most cases we prefer herbal medicines to help with mood, although there are other choices available, including amino acids. For example: the amino acid tryptophan can be used by your body to make serotonin which is a neurotransmitter involved in many areas including sleep, appetite regulation and mood.

Although tryptophan is not available in the UK, 5-HTP is a suitable alternative. The body converts tryptophan to serotonin via 5-HTP as shown below.



How to use

Amino acids are normally taken between meals, to ensure that the amino acid in the capsule is absorbed rather than other proteins in the meals.

Cautions and Contraindications: There are a number of interactions possible depending on the amino acid used therefore follow the on packet directions and seek advice if you have an existing medical condition.

NEWS & VIEWS

HAYFEVER SEASON

If you are still looking for a natural solution, why not consider:

- Natural anti-histamines: **plantain** (*Plantago lanceolata*) and **nettle** (*Urtica dioica*). These herbs are generally thought to work best if taken before, as well as during, the hayfever season.
- Other herbs such as **eyebright** (*Euphrasia officinalis*) which can help to dry watery eyes, or **chamomile** (*Chamomilla recutita*) tea which can be used to bathe and soothe dry eyes.
- Nasal sprays such as Weleda's **Rhinodoron** which can help clear the sinuses, relieve catarrh and prevent the pollen aggravating the nasal passages.

PLANT JUICES

Some plant juices are becoming increasingly popular as natural remedies. Some of the juices tend to have limited traditional use in Europe, but many years of use in their native tropical countries. We have found that sometimes a juice can be marketed as a "cure all", if this was really true about any product there would be no need for doctors! Be wary when reading claims about any miracle product. Part of the reason for the many claims made for juices is that all fresh juices (fruit, vegetables and herbs) will be naturally high in antioxidants. Antioxidants reduce damage from free radicals throughout the body, reducing damage due to degenerative conditions and aging.

Here is some brief information that we have managed to collect about some current popular juices.

Aloe Vera is a long time favourite. It is high in vitamins and minerals, and a complete source of essential amino acids. It is healing and soothing to the body's tissues, and is antibacterial. Therefore it can be applied to the skin, or taken internally where it will soothe and heal the digestive tract. Because it improves the digestion and is a rich source of vitamins, minerals and amino acids it can help with a wide range of disorders.

PRODUCTS

Noni is used to boost and enhance the body's immune system. It is also said to interact with the body's regenerative process.

Pomegranate is a very rich source of antioxidants and it has been used widely in many cultures from the Middle East, Iran and India.

Cranberry has been used to treat urine infections for many years. It should be the natural juice that is used, not the sweetened juice sometimes found in supermarkets. Some of the constituents of cranberries actually help bacteria to slip off the urinary tract, helping to remove the infection.

Mangosteen has been used in the cultures of Southeast Asia for hundreds of years to relieve symptoms associated with conditions such as diarrhoea, dysentery, eczema, and urinary disorders however often these are using the rind, the leaves, the bark or the root rather than the juice. The juice and rind contain a high concentration of xanthenes, one of the most powerful types of anti-oxidant. Another use of the juice is to support the immune system.

We stock Aloe vera, Noni and Pomegranate juices, and look forward to hearing some first-hand testimonies!

EMPTY TEA BAGS



We have finally managed to obtain a supply of empty tea bags. These can be filled with your favourite loose herbs or herb

blend, to use at home, to take to work or on holiday. They are non-bleached and compostable (available in 4 sizes, from £2 for 100).

CLINIC

REFLEXOLOGY



Reflexology is the use of finger pressure (acu-pressure) on the feet or hands in order to bring about a balance in the body. The practitioner makes use of specific

pressure points which assist the body's own healing power. The points used correspond to particular parts, or zones, of the body.

Dating back to at least 5000BC, when the Chinese were known to have practiced a form of pressure therapy similar to that of acupuncture, interest in zone therapy rose in the 16th century and books by Doctors in middle-European countries were published on the subject.

At the turn of the 20th Century an American physician Dr Fitzgerald, studied in Vienna, Paris and London, and developed an interest in reflex zone therapy. He published a book called "zone therapy" in 1917 in which he explained his findings: the body was made up of 10 longitudinal zones each one corresponding to the fingers and toes. An energy block or disturbance in a zone could affect other organs within that zone, and pressure applied to part of that zone could clear that block. In 1938 Eunice D Ingham, having developed the Ingham compression method of reflexology, published "The Stories Feet can Tell" and "Stories the Feet have Told". She concentrated in the reflexes to be found in the feet. Doreen Bayly studied with Eunice Ingham and brought her method back to the UK. Where she set up the Bayly school of Reflexology.

Reflexology is now popular throughout the UK and is considered to reduce stress and encourage relaxation. It can help detoxify the body (encouraging elimination), re-energises and can be helpful to prevent health problems. It is also highly enjoyable!

Price: £30 for 1 hour.

Available at Woodland Herbs: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

New Therapies:

Hot Stone Massage

Hot Stone Massage uses volcanic basalt stones known for their heat retaining properties to massage, as well as being placed on the body. The deep heat combined with therapeutic massage techniques are a uniquely relaxing massage treatment.

Price: £30 for 1 hour.

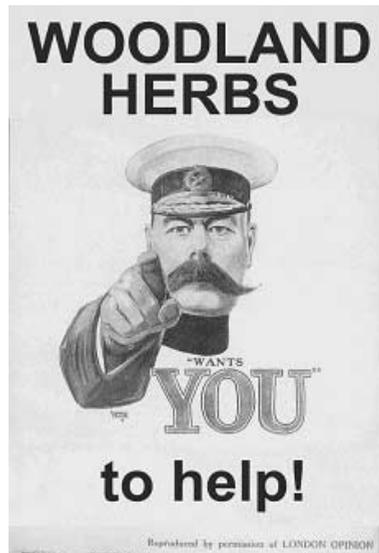
Available: Tuesdays and Fridays.

Acupressure Massage

Acupressure Massage combines therapeutic massage techniques with acupressure. It is acupuncture without the needles!

Price: 30 minutes £20, 1 hour £30.

Available: Wednesdays and Fridays



We are putting together a folder of testimonials about the shop and the clinic to help future clients and customers to see what we do. If you are willing to help us by supplying a testimonial please either send in a letter or email, or contact us for more information. Thank you.