

Medicinal (RX) Herb Info

Backyard Heirloom Seeds & Herbs

Tip: Use brown bags or baggies and rubber band over drying blooms to catch seeds from falling while drying & harvesting seeds.

Borage The fresh herb has a cucumber-like fragrance. When steeped in water, it imparts coolness to it and a faint cucumber flavor- a refreshing summer drink. Often mixed with lemon and sugar in wine. It was formerly always an ingredient in cool tankards of wine and cider, and is still largely used in claret cup. It has long been grown freely in kitchen gardens, both for its uses as a herb and for the sake of its flowers, which yield excellent honey. Our great grandmothers preserved the flowers and candied them. It is known that Borage makes the heart glad and helps to remove sorrow and depression. The leaves are slightly more potent than the flower- both can be used in salad or greens as a pot herb. Many have found the plant useful for fever, snakebite, jaundice, consumption, sore throat, depression, jaundice, itch, ringworm and rheumatism. Borage flourishes in ordinary soil. Direct sow, leaving the seed exposed to light for germination. It may be propagated by division of rootstocks in spring and by putting cuttings of shoots in sandy soil in a cold frame in summer and autumn, or from seeds sown in fairly good, light soil, from the middle of March to May. Thin the seedlings out to about 15 inches apart in the rows. Seeds may also be sown in the autumn. Those sown then will flower in May, whereas those sown in the spring will not flower till June. Use the small new leaves and the distinctive 1 1/2 inch star shaped purple-blue flowers in hot and cold drinks, especially teas. If left alone, Borage will seed itself freely and comes up year after year in the same place. If harvesting seeds, watch for the fading flower tops- the seed will remain when the flower falls. Use the bag tip or check daily. Easily grown from seed. Seeds can be started indoors 3-4 weeks before the last frost or direct seeded just after the danger of frost has passed.

Planting: Plant seeds just beneath the surface of the soil. Borage prefers full sun and rich, moist soil. Plants typically grow 2-3' tall.

Seed Saving: Borage is extremely easy to save seed from. Just keep a close eye on the blooms and when they begin to fade and turn brown, pick the seeds. Be sure to get them before they fall as Borage is very good at seeding itself for the next season, even without your help.

Burdock has an ancient and respected reputation as a nutritive liver tonic that helps to clean and build the blood, while its diuretic action of burdock helps in the elimination of waste materials. Taken internally, this root promotes sweating and urination. The roots, leaves, and seeds of burdock can all be used, but in commercial preparations, you'll most commonly find the root. Rich in minerals, this plant is used as a food by many cultures. Burdock helps to cleanse the body from the inside out and is most useful in those conditions that can be traced back to liver disorders or a general overload of toxins in the system. The root is good for the kidneys, liver, eczema, acne, psoriasis, and for lowering blood sugar. Use the dried or fresh root and make a tea. A biennial member of the aster family that may grow up to 8 feet tall, it has large leaves with a multitude of thistle-like purplish flowers with seed bearing burrs. Young burdock leaf stalks are a good addition to soups, but are bitter raw. The light-brown sturdy taproot may weigh up to 2 -4 pounds in a second year plant and is the part used in herbal medicine. Dig up roots- all or leave some babies for the next year. The plant can be invasive so use caution. Dry the plant or eat in stews etc...When the pieces snap and are internally dry, they may be ground up to make the tincture or stored in plastic bags or glass jars for later use.

Planting: Sow seed in spring directly in regular to sandy garden soil

Seed saving: This plant has burrs that will attach themselves to hair and fur, a clever adaptive technique resulting in the wide distribution of burdock seed. When these burrs pull readily off the dry plant, the seed is fully mature. Pull the mature burrs from the plant and put them in a bucket. Wear leather gloves. You will probably notice a general itchiness to your skin.

Dandelion There are so many uses claimed for the plant that it takes place among the herbal cure-alls. Its most frequent use, however, is as an herb to heal the liver. It is thought to be especially useful in cases of enlargement of the liver, scurvy, scrofula, eczema and all eruptions on the surface of the body, for jaundice and is even used in healing little children. Throughout history, dandelions have had a high reputation as being effective in promoting weight loss. Dandelion is a good source of Pectin, Vitamin C and Coumestrol, an estrogen mimic, which is responsible in part, for stimulating milk flow and altering hormones. Pectin is prescribed regularly in Russia to remove heavy metals and radioactive elements from body tissues and lowers cholesterol.

Plant only fresh seed in Spring to avoid the headache of dormancy-fresh seed will grow in quickly.

Seed saving: wait for heads to dry and pop off (clean and store)

Echinacea, purple coneflower Originally native to a wide band stretching from Michigan south to Louisiana, then west to Texas and Oklahoma, but currently uncommon in the wild. Widely cultivated. Does well in pots. The taproot of cultivated *plant* is harvested three-to-four years from seed. It is the root that is believed to contain most of the plant's medicinal value, although the herb is also used. It is regarded as the most chemically active plant, possessing anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal properties. Traditional/folk uses include a blood purifier, fevers, acne, and to treat infections and sores. Cultivation: Sow seed in the early spring in flats outdoors or in the greenhouse, and transplant seedlings out to the garden or field in mid-spring (middle of May in our area). Starting earlier, and transplanting twice into progressively bigger containers will result in a much better rooted transplant, which will probably flower in the first year. It is fairly easy to seed this plant directly in the garden or field. Sow the seed shallowly in the early to mid-spring. Keep moist. Once the plants are up, you must stay on top of the weeds, and thin to 1 foot spacing after the second set of leaves has formed. *E. purpurea* likes full sun, plenty of water, and rich, limey soil. This is the species best suited to varied growing conditions, whether coastal or mountain, east or west. It is easy to grow, and produces on the average 1/2 pound of fresh root by the dormant period following the second year of growth. Plant 1 foot apart. Flowers 3 to 4 feet tall.

Planting: Sow outdoors 1/2" deep when a light frost is still possible. Seeds will germinate in 10-20 days. Coneflower prefers full sun to light shade and well-drained average soil. Tolerates heat and drought. Flowers reliably the first year from seed if sown early. Perennial.

Seed Saving: Coneflowers will produce lots of seed but you must beat the birds. When the blooms dry out, cut them off and hang upside down in bunches. The seeds are contained in the heads between the spikes. Once the heads are dry and crisp, they can be lightly hand-crushed, with gloves on for protection, and the seed winnowed from the chaff.

Elecampane, official Elecampane is known best as a respiratory tonic used as an expectorant to ease breathing and clear the lungs in cases of asthma, bronchitis and other pulmonary infections. A bitter tonic, elecampane also is used as a digestive herb, and was used in Europe was used in the manufacture of absinthe. The active ingredient, helenin has been shown to have antiseptic properties. Great as a tea for coughs-using the root or leaf. Has also been known to assist with asthma, bronchitis, sinus infection, horse medicine, and parasites.

Planting: Giant plant bearing handsome, yellow flowers. Harvest and dry the octopus-like roots in the fall of the second year's growth. Cough and lung remedy, bitter and antiseptic. Elecampane has a strong activity against bronchial infection, pneumonia and debilitating, chronic cough. The plant is processed to yield a blue dye. Sow seed in greenhouse in early spring or sow directly in garden in mid-spring. Light-dependent germinator (plant on surface or only very shallowly covered, so light can penetrate). Expect excellent germination in about 12 days. After second set of leaves appear, transplant seedlings out to the garden, even if you still expect a few frosts. Grows in full sun or appreciates partial shade. Plant 2 feet apart.

Seed Saving: Harvest when seed heads are withered and pop off to complete drying.

Evening Primrose Self-seeding biennial. Native to Europe and North America. This herb is very drought tolerant, bravely producing bloom after yellow, mucilaginous bloom in the evenings, despite sun-baked conditions. The seed is high in gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), an intermediate in the synthesis of prostaglandins. Some women report alleviation of PMS by eating the plant and the seeds. The flowers especially make a tasty addition to salads.

Planting: Scatter seed on surface of disturbed soil in fall or early spring, or start on surface of flat and transplant. Seed requires exposure to light in order to germinate. Sow 12 inches apart. Flowers to 3 to 4 feet.

Seed Saving: Seed collection is easy. Allow the seed pods to dry to a papery brown, they will open with a star shape at their exterior end. Clip six inch lengths of dried stem with pods attached and place them upside-down in a paper bag. Allow the stems to dry for a few days. Tightly fold up the open end of the bag and give it a good shake. The seeds will be shaken from the pods. Remove the stems and pour the seeds out onto a pie plate. Gently puff away the chaff. Seeds are brown and very small, about the size of a flea.

Feverfew This is a plant made for high medicinal activity. Its medicinal uses vary from gas relief; can promote menstrual flow, a purgative (strong laxative), stimulant, and bitter tonic. Feverfew will reduce fever and acts as a mild laxative and anti-inflammatory. Try a warm tea infusion for colic, flatulence, indigestion, flu, colds, fever and alcoholism. A cold extract has a tonic effect. The flowers in particular show a purgative action. Relieves headaches, migraines, arthritis, neuritis, neuralgia, and indigestion, colds, and muscle tension. Eliminates worms. Stimulates the appetite, increases fluidity of lung and bronchial tube mucus, stimulates uterine contractions, and promotes menses. 1-4 leaves chewed per day proven in the past to be effective for some migraine headaches- noticeable results may take a few months. Bees and bug "pest" find the odor and taste of feverfew highly repulsive. Use as a repellent or place near plants that need natural bug killer such as roses.

Planting: Sowing the seeds is simple, pat them into the soil surface in spring and ignore any chaff bits as they will not interfere with germination

Seed Saving: The seeds are easy to collect. Simply strip off the dried seed head, allow it to dry on a plate for a few days, and then crumble it with your fingers. It will break apart into many small light-wheat colored seeds. They are very tiny things, like bits of a thin line. There will be some chaff in with the seeds but it is also small. Good traders send these seed with chaff as it is so difficult to separate the two.

Flax Annual. Native to temperate Europe and Asia. Flax is pretty in the garden, with the added advantage of yielding a valuable seed crop. Homegrown organic linseed is very tasty as an addition to breads or cereals, and since rancidity can be a problem, it is very nice to grow your own to assure that it is entirely fresh. If taken alone, supplement with plenty of water. Linseed is a swell able fiber loaded with oil and mucilage which soothe the intestinal tract and stimulate peristalsis.

Planting: Easy to grow. Cultivate an area of good soil in the spring and strew the seed on the surface, working in with your fingers. Pat down soil surface and water. The plant grows best in a self-supporting patch, not in a carefully defined row. The distinctive sprouts appear quickly and tend to out-distance weeds, as they grow quite rapidly to 2 feet tall. Spring sown plants will not bloom until the next year. Try sowing seeds early in the fall, and they will bloom the next spring. Ideal plant spacing is 10" -12". They will tolerate a little crowding.

Seed Saving: Prune plants to promote good air circulation. After the flowers have bloomed, harvest the seeds and use them for herbal or culinary purposes.

German Chamomile Besides being my families all time favorite evening herbal tea, dried chamomile flowers in a simple muslin bag make a wonderful, relaxing bath. I also love that sweet, apple aroma in herb pillows. Chamomile is an excellent remedy for all manner of women's disorders and is especially valuable for problems arising from stress, anxiety, and tension. It has a wonderfully soothing, sedative and absolutely harmless effect. It is considered a preventive and the sole certain remedy for nightmare. Inhaling the essential oil of chamomile lowers stress and helps to counteract allergies and insomnia, which are often factors in anxiety and attention deficit disorder (ADD). Herbalists especially recommend it for sleeplessness in children.

Planting: Take your seed packages and sprinkle these seeds directly onto the surface of the soil. Do not bury the seeds. They need light to germinate.

Seed Saving: Collect dead flower heads after they have bloomed and before they re seed them self.

Hyssop Hyssop is usually used in combination with other herbs such as licorice, in herbal remedies, especially for lung conditions. Hyssop also has uses in the garden, it is said to be a good companion plant to cabbage, partly because it will lure away the Cabbage White butterfly. It has also "been found to improve the yield from grapevines if planted along the rows, particularly if the terrain is rocky or sandy, and the soil is not as easy to work as it might be". Hyssop is said to be antagonistic to radishes, and they should not be grown nearby. Hyssop also attracts bees, hoverflies and butterflies, thus has a place in the wild garden as well as being useful in controlling pests and encouraging pollination without the use of unnatural methods. Hyssop leaves can be preserved by drying. They should be harvested on a dry day at the peak of their maturity and the concentration of active ingredients is highest. They should be dried quickly, away from

bright sunlight in order to preserve their aromatic ingredients and prevent oxidation of other chemicals. Good air circulation is required, such as an airing cupboard with the door left open, or hung upside down in a sunny room, aiming for a temperature of 20-32°C. Hyssop leaves should dry out in about six days, any longer and they will begin to discolor and lose their flavor. The dried leaves are stored in clean, dry, labeled airtight containers, and will keep for 12-18 months.

Planting: Seeds, cuttings or division in spring or fall. Sow seeds 1/4 inch deep in rows about 1 foot apart.
Seed Saving: Remove old flower heads –plant will need replacing every 4-5 years.

Lemon Balm Not to be confused with bee balm, *Monarda* species, is a perennial herb in the mint family. The leaves have a gentle lemon scent, related to mint. At the end of the summer, little white flowers full of nectar appear. These attract bees, hence the genus name *Melissa* (Greek for 'honey bee'). The crushed leaves, when rubbed on the skin, are used as a repellent for mosquitoes. Lemon Balm is also used medicinally as an herbal tea, or in extract form. It is claimed to have antibacterial, antiviral properties (it is effective against herpes simplex), and it is also used as a mild sedative or calming agent. One study has found it to be effective at reducing stress. Its antibacterial properties have also been demonstrated scientifically, although they are markedly weaker than those from a number of other plants studied. Lemon balm essential oil is very popular in aromatherapy. The essential oil is commonly co-distilled with lemon oil, citronella oil, or other oils.

*Lemon balm should be avoided by those on thyroid medication as it is believed that the herb inhibits the absorption of this medicine. For drying, harvest whole stems of young shoot's 30cm (2 inches) long and air dry. Lemon balm darkens when air dried and the scent and medicinal properties of the herb are reduced slightly.

Planting : Sow directly in Spring

Seed Saving: Harvest when seeds are dried and brown

Marshmallow Tall, ornamental, velvety leaved plant with large, soft pink flowers clustered in the leaf axils. A plant of many uses, the seeds, flowers, and young leaves can be eaten. In herbalism mallow is used as a gargle to treat mouth and throat ulcers. It is also useful for gastric ulcers. The flowers and young leaves can be eaten. They are often added to salads or boiled and fried. The root has been used since Egyptian antiquity in a honey-sweetened confection useful in the treatment of sore throat. Marshmallow moistens the respiratory system making it useful for dry coughs, bronchitis, asthma, whooping cough, dry or inflamed lungs, and respiratory catarrh. Use it with licorice and horehound for bronchitis. Marshmallow is a diuretic encouraging the body to flush out the urinary tract. The leaf is good for kidney and bladder inflammations, blood in the urine, urethritis, cystitis, incontinence, difficult or painful urination and gravel or kidney stones. The root is good for the skin to help reduce inflammations and infections. Use it for boils, burns, wounds, ulcers, abscesses, bruises, gangrene and varicose veins. It works well used as a compress or poultice. Root should be ready for harvesting after 2 years.

Planting: Sow seeds in Autumn, protect during winter cold snaps. Trim once in mid summer.

Seed Saving: Harvest when flowers heads have bloomed.

Orange Calendula, Bon Bon The leaves and petals of the Pot Marigold are edible, with the petals added to dishes as a garnish and in lieu of saffron. The leaves can be sweet but are more commonly bitter, and may be used in salads. *Calendula* is a cultivated herb and can be grown easily in sunny locations in most kinds of soils. *Calendula* is used for the treatment of skin disorders and pain, and as a bactericide, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory. Mix with olive oil, melted bees wax, juice from (slowly cooked down) plantain and comfrey for a soothing- very healing salve. Most natural eczema salves contain calendula. It is a wonderful healer.

Planting: Sow seeds indoors 6-8 weeks before the last frost or directly outdoors after the last frost. Seeds germinate in 5-15 days. Plants prefer full sun but will tolerate light shade in warmer areas.

Seed Saving: Collect dead flower heads after they have bloomed

Peppermint Peppermint is sometimes regarded as 'the world's oldest medicine', with archaeological evidence placing its use at least as far back as ten thousand years ago. Peppermint has high menthol content, and is often used as a flavoring in tea (MY FAVORITE), ice cream, confectionery, gum and toothpaste. Has been known to reduce irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) symptoms and colic. *be prepared to contain plant as it will spread!!

Planting : Sow directly in Spring

Seed Saving: Harvest when seeds are dried and brown

Plantain, major- Turkish*when avail. This is the largest true plantago worldwide. EVERY garden should have this valuable plant. Given sun to part shade and moist soils, you'll have plantain to your waist, and leaves as big as dinner plates. Very easy to grow and hugely impressive to visitors. Another one of its common names was "Soldier's Herb" for its use on the battlefield as a field dressing- it is a POTENT coagulant (stops bleeding). The leaves are edible and used in herbal medicine, but can be somewhat tough. The taste is that of very bitter salad greens with a lingering aftertaste like spinach. Young leaves are recommended as they are more tender. The leaves when dried make a good tea. Historical uses as a wound healer and snakebite remedy. *It also* contains the cell proliferate *allantoin*, and is used as a replacement for Comfrey (another good healer) in herbal preparations. Traditionally has been used to prevent uterine bleeding after childbirth (made into a tea and inserted via a douche), and a variety of other ailments. This can be tested easily by taking some water-based paint, making some plantain tea and mixing the two together. The paint particles will immediately permanently separate from the water. *People who take blood thinners or those prone to blood clots should never use plantain internally.

Planting: Direct sow after danger of frost.

Seed Saving: When the plant flowers are spent, the seed harden on the tall spikes making it as easy as picking up sticks to harvest. Use the leaves any time.

St John's Wort A pretty evergreen with yellow flowers. St John's wort is today most widely known as an herbal treatment for major and minor depression. The aerial parts of the plant can be cut and dried for later delivery of the active ingredient hyperforin in the form of an herbal tea with a pleasant, though somewhat bitter, taste. Hyperforin has also been found to have antibacterial properties, and is believed to stimulate the release of the neuro transmitter nor epinephrine, leading to speculation that it might alleviate the symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Planting: Plant St. John's Wort by seed in the spring. Seeds can take up to three months to germinate, so leave some to reseed every year until rootlets are established.

Seed Saving: Harvest by cutting off the top 1/3 part of the plant in July. Allow some to go to seed.

AS WITH ANY INJECTED HERB -USE ONLY WITH DR SUPERVISION

*keep from livestock *may interfere with medication *spreads

Nettle *as avail. Nettles are a potent herb with a long history of use. This herb is one of nature's best nutraceuticals, containing protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, magnesium, beta-carotene, along with vitamins A, C, D, and B complex, all in a form that is easy for the body to use. The stinging comes from the presence on the bristles of histamine that delivers a stinging burn when the hairs on the leaves and stems are touched. Extracts of nettle roots are reliable diuretics that encourage excretion of uric acid, but simultaneously discourage nighttime bathroom urges, making this remarkable plant useful for such disparate problems as gout, bed-wetting, and, the overnight urinary woes of benign prostate enlargement.

Nettles use a tonic of the female system goes back to the Native American women who used it throughout pregnancy and as a remedy to stop hemorrhaging during childbirth. It is considered one of the best all round women's tonics. Use two teaspoons of dried nettles per pint of boiling water for table or afternoon tea and increase to three to four teaspoons per pint for medicinal tea .The completely dried herb can be sprinkled onto food. The fresh young plants cooked until tender are excellent with just a little butter.

Lemon Grass *as avail. Lemon grass has an intriguing, lemony perfume without the bite that lemons can add to a dish. The taste is refreshing and light, with a hint of ginger. These qualities make it blend well with garlic, chilies, and cilantro. It is most often used in curries, marinades, stews, and seafood soups as it needs liquids to bring out its essential oils. Its citrus taste helps to lighten some of the richer tasting dishes. Lemon grass is also used as the basis of a popular drink in the tropics, and as a tea. Also can be used fresh, dried or powdered. As the lemon grass grows, it sends out new stalks from the central base. Once these are about 2 1/2" long and 3/4" wide at the base, they are ready to use. To harvest from your plant, just cut off the stalks you need leaving the rest to continue to grow -- a bit of the tropics in your own back yard. When using it fresh, strip off the tough outer leaves and cut off the bottom root portion. Lemon grass has been used for in teas to combat depression and bad moods, fight fever and as well as nervous and digestive disorders. Studies show that lemon grass has antibacterial and antifungal properties. The oil is used to cleanse oily skin, and in aromatherapy it is used as a relaxant. Valued for its exotic citrus fragrance, it is commercially used in soaps, perfumes and as an ingredient in sachets. I especially love this light spa like fragrance.