

Barley Grass (*Hordeum vulgare*)

Barley grass is one of the green grasses - the only vegetation on the earth that can supply sole nutritional support from birth to old age. Barley has served as a food staple in most cultures. The use of barley for food and medicinal purposes dates to antiquity. Agronomists place this ancient cereal grass as being cultivated as early as 7000 BC. Roman gladiators ate barley for strength and stamina. In the West, it was first known for the barley grain it produces.

Astounding amounts of vitamins and minerals are found in green barley leaves. The leaves have an ability to absorb nutrients from the soil. When barley leaves are 12-14 inches high, they contain many vitamins, minerals, and proteins necessary for the human diet, plus chlorophyll. These are easily assimilated throughout the digestive tract, giving our bodies instant access to vital nutrients. These include potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, copper, phosphorus, manganese, zinc, beta carotene, B1, B2, B6, C, folic acid, and pantothenic acid. Indeed, green barley juice contains 11 times the calcium in cows' milk, nearly 5 times the iron in spinach, 7 times the vitamin C in oranges, and 80 mg of vitamin B12 per hundred grams.

Barley also contains a -glucan, a fiber also found in oat bran and reported to reduce cholesterol levels. The root contains the alkaloid hordenine which stimulates peripheral blood circulation and has been used as a bronchodilator for bronchitis. Barley bran, like wheat bran may be effective in protecting against the risk of cancer.

Part Used: Grain, left when barley hull is removed.

Common Use: Barley is widely cultivated grain used as a food and in the brewing process. It is an additive for human and animal cereal foods. It also makes a flavorful flour for use in baking breads and muffins.

Care: It is a very hardy plant and can be grown under a greater variety of climatic conditions than any other grain, and a polar variety is grown within the Arctic Circle in Europe.

Basil

MEDICINAL: Basil is used to treat stomach cramps, vomiting, fevers, colds, flu, headaches, whooping cough, and menstrual pains. It is also used to reduce stomach acid, making it a valuable part of any treatment for ulcers, and a valuable addition to any recipe using tomatoes for those with sensitive stomachs. Externally, it can be used for insect bites, to draw out the poisons. It has been used in other countries to eliminate worms from the intestines, and the oil from basil leaves is applied directly to the skin to treat acne.

GROWING: Basil will grow in any well-drained, fairly rich soil, and full sun. It can be grown throughout most of North America. It is an

annual, which reaches 2-3 feet tall. Pinch off the tips to promote bushiness and flower buds to maintain growth.

Bayberry

MEDICINAL: Bayberry, taken in small doses, increases the vitality of your total body systems, improving circulation. It can also be used as a poultice over varicose veins to strengthen the blood vessels. A douche made of the tea is used for vaginal infections. Tea made of Bayberry is a good gargle for sore throat and tonsillitis.

Bay Laurel

USE: Sprinkling the crushed leaves in your cupboards will keep out cockroaches and other insect pests.

Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)

Bilberry is a perennial, ornamental shrub that is commonly found in various climates in damp woodlands and moorlands. In the United States they are known as huckleberries, and there are over 100 species with similar names and fruit throughout the Europe, Asia and North America. The English call them whortleberries. The Scots know them as blaeberrries. Bilberry has been used as a medicinal herb since the 16th century.

Bilberry is also used in connection with vascular and blood disorders and shows positive effects when treating varicose veins, thrombosis, and angina. Bilberry's fruit contains flavonoids and anthocyanin, which serve to prevent capillary fragility, thin the blood, and stimulate the release of vasodilators. Anthocyanin, a natural antioxidant, also lowers blood pressure, reduces clotting and improves blood supply to the nervous system. Bilberry also contains glucoquinine that has the ability to lower blood sugar. The herb contains Vitamins A and C, providing antioxidant protection which can help prevent free radical damage to the eyes. Vitamin A is required for sharp vision, while Vitamin C helps form collagen and is needed for growth and repair of tissue cells and blood vessels. Anthocyanosides support and protect collagen structures in the blood vessels of the eyes, assuring strong, healthy capillaries that carry vital nutrients to eye muscles and nerves.

Bilberry has long been a remedy for poor vision and "night blindness." Clinical tests confirm that given orally it improves visual accuracy in healthy people, and can help those with eye diseases such as pigmentosa, retinitis, glaucoma, and myopia. During World War II, British Royal Air Force pilots ate Bilberry preserves before night missions as an aid to night vision. Bilberry works by improving the microcirculation and regeneration of retinal purple, a substance required for good eyesight.

Dried Bilberry fruit and Bilberry tea has been used as a treatment for diarrhea and as a relief for nausea and indigestion. Bilberry is also used as a treatment for mild inflammation of the mucous membranes of the mouth and throat.

Part Used: Berries, leaves

Common Use: Bilberry contains nutrients needed to protect eyes from eyestrain or fatigue, and can improve circulation to the eyes. Bilberry tea is administered to treat stomach problems and soothe the digestive tract. The leaves and berries are used in the homeopathic treatment of diabetes. Bilberries are used in making jams, preserves, liqueurs, and wines.

Care: Prefers filtered shade and moist, fertile soil that is acidic and non calcareous.

Bistort

MEDICINAL: Bistort root, when ground and mixed with echinacea, myrrh, and goldenseal, is a great dressing for cuts and other wounds. It is also a powerful astringent, used by mixing a teaspoon in a cup of boiled water, and drunk several times a day, as a treatment for diarrhea and dysentery. The same mixture can be used as a gargle for sore throats. Bistort is good to drive out infectious disease, and is effective for all internal and external bleeding.

GROWING: Bistort prefers damp soils, such as in cultivated fields. It is native to Europe, but has been grown in Nova Scotia and as far south as Massachusetts. It is a perennial that reaches up to 30 inches tall.

Blackberry

MEDICINAL: A syrup made from the root is used to treat diarrhea and upset stomach (good for treating children). An infusion of the leaves is good for treating diarrhea and sore throat.

GROWING: Blackberries are perennial vines that grow in many areas, depending on the variety. They require full sun, very good air circulation, fertile soil that is kept moist, not soggy. Do not grow where you have grown other fruits or vegetables, to avoid transferring diseases to the young vines. Some varieties need pollinators, so check with your local nurseries to find a variety best suited to your needs and climate.

Black Cohosh

MEDICINAL: Black Cohosh is useful in all conditions dealing with arthritis. It improves blood circulation, and is used in treating delayed and painful menstruation, and is often used in conjunction

with other herbs in treating menopause symptoms. It should not be used during pregnancy. Black Cohosh can be poisonous in large doses. It contains a chemical much like estrogen, so those advised by their doctor's not to take the Pill shoud avoid using this herb.

GROWING: Black Cohosh grows in open woody areas. It needs good soil and partial to mostly shade to do well. It has been grown as far south as Georgia, and as far west as Missouri. It is a perennial which reaches 3 - 8 feet tall.

Blessed Thistle

MEDICINAL: Blessed Thistle is used to strengthen the heart, and is useful in all remedies for lung, kidney, and liver problems. It is also used as a brain food for stimulating the memory. It is used in remedies for menopause and for menstrual cramping. Often used by lactating women to stimulate blood flow to the mammary glands and increases the flow of milk.

GROWING: Blessed Thistle is generally found along roadsides and in wastelands. It is an annual, and reaches to 2 feet tall. Most folks consider this a pesky weed, so cultivation is not common. Try gathering some for yourself from the wild, if you dare the stickers - buying commercial is best!

Blue Cohosh

MEDICINAL: Blue Cohosh is used to regulate the menstrual flow. It is also used for suppressed menstruation. Native Americans used this herb during childbirth to ease the pain and difficulty that accompany birthing, as well as to induce labor. This herb should not be taken during pregnancy, and should be taken in very small amounts in conjunction with other herbs, such as Black Cohosh.

GROWING: Blue Cohosh grows best in deep, loamy, moist woodlands. The berry of this plant is poisonous, and the plant itself can irritate the skin. The root is the part used in herbal medicine. It has a range from southern Canada, as far south as the Carolinas, and as far west as Missouri. This herb is best purchased from the stores, rather than cultivated.

Blue Cohosh is one of the oldest indigeneous American plant drugs. Modern herbals recommend it for "female conditions" especially as a uterine stimulant, inducer of menstruation, and antispasmodic. The plant contains a number of alkaloids and glycosides. Animal studies show that actions of the alkaloid methylcystine resemble those of nicotine. This compound elevates blood pressure and stimulates respiration and intestinal motility.

Blue Cohosh's effect of hastening childbirth is apparently produced by glycoside caulosaponin. This compound constricts the coronary blood vessels, thus exerting a toxic effect on cardiac muscles, and causes intestinal spasms in small animals. In view of these potent compounds, blue conosh should not be dismissed

as either inactive or harmless. Discretion dictates that the herb not be used for medical self treatment.

Blue Cohosh is not the same herb as Black Cohosh.

Boneset

MEDICINAL: Used for treating severe fevers, as well as flu and catarrh conditions. One to two tablespoons of the tincture in hot water is used for sweat therapy to break fevers.

GROWING: Boneset prefers damp to moist rich soils. It is a North American native perennial that reaches 2 to 4 feet high, and grows in partial sun.

Borage

MEDICINAL: Used for treating bronchitis, rashes, and to increase mother's milk. The infusion is used as an eyewash.

GROWING: Borage was once widely planted in gardens throughout Europe. It was brought to the United States, and now grows wild in much of the eastern half of the nation. It is an annual that grows in most soils, tolerates dry spells, and prefers full sun, reaching to 2 feet in height.

Burdock

MEDICINAL: Burdock Root is used to treat skin diseases, boils, fevers, inflammations, hepatitis, swollen glands, some cancers, and fluid retention. It is an excellent blood purifier. A tea made of the leaves of Burdock is also used for indigestion. Very useful for building the systems of young women. Helps clear persistent teenage acne if taken for three to four weeks. Used with dandelion root for a very effective liver cleanser and stimulator.