

Herbal Medicine from
Your
Garden or Windowsill

8



Sacred Herbs
for Healing

Frann Leach

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Table of Contents

[Herbs with religious connections](#)

[Why organic growing methods are important](#)

[Safety First](#)

[Remedies in this book which can be used during pregnancy.](#)

[Ajowan](#)

[Crab Apple](#)

[Thorn Apple](#)

[Ashwagandha](#)

[Barberry](#)

[Chamomile](#)

[Passion Flower](#)

[Frankincense](#)

[Hyssop](#)

[Jacob's Ladder](#)

[Lily of the Valley](#)

[Sacred Lotus](#)

[Love Lies Bleeding](#)

[Lungwort](#)

[European Mistletoe](#)

[Plantain](#)

[Rue](#)

[European Goat's Rue](#)

[Solomon's Seal](#)

[Southernwood](#)

[Blessed Milk Thistle](#)

[St Benedict's Thistle](#)

[Vervain](#)

[Bishop's Weed](#)

[Sweet Woodruff](#)

[Wormwood](#)

[St John's Wort](#)

[Index of Remedies](#)

Herbs with religious connections

I originally intended to cover only Christian sacred herbs in this book, but once I'd eliminated the ones I've already covered in previous volumes, there were not enough to make an ebook. Because of this, I've searched further afield and found half a dozen herbs used by other religions, including Wicca, Buddhism, Hinduism and the Jewish religion. The majority of herbs included relate to Christianity, however.



I've described a number of very attractive herbs, as well as at least one weed (though even the humble plantain has been mucked about with to produce an ornamental variety). The Christian ones are ajowan, thorn apple, barberry, passion flower, frankincense, hyssop, Jacob's ladder, lily of the valley, love lies bleeding, lungwort, rue, European goat's rue, Solomon's seal, southernwood, blessed milk thistle, St Benedict's thistle, vervain, bishop's weed, sweet woodruff, wormwood and St John's wort. Herbs from other religions included here are sacred lotus (Buddhist/Hindu), ashwagandha (Hindu), crab apple, chamomile, mistletoe and plantain (Wicca/Paganism).

Other plants which might have been included here are (starting with the bible-related ones):

angelica (archangel) and sweet basil (St Joseph's wort) from [volume](#)

2;

costmary (bible leaf/plant, sweet Mary) and cowslip (herb Peter, our Lady's keys, St Peter's keys) from [volume 3](#);

dandelion (priest's crown) and holy basil from [volume 4](#);

gayfeather (Devil's bite) from [volume 5](#);

false unicorn root (Devil's bite), nerve root (Noah's ark, bleeding heart) and rose root (Aaron's rod) from [volume 6](#); and

goldenrod (Aaron's rod), great mullein (Aaron's rod, Adam's flannel, Moses' blanket, our Lady's flannel, Peter's staff), herb Robert (St Robert's herb), Lady's bedstraw and white deadnettle (archangel) from [volume 7](#).

I could also have chosen asafetida (aka food of the gods) for the Hindus from volume 6, marijuana for all Rastafari from volume 3, and the other six wiccan sacred herbs: watercress from volume 2, chervil and fennel from volume 4, betony from volume 5, mugwort from volume 6 and nettle from volume 7.

Why organic growing methods are important

Readers of my blog [Herbal Medicine from Your Garden](#) will be aware that I always say that herbs and other plants grown for medicinal use should be grown organically. The primary reason for this is safety.

Research has shown that pesticides and other chemicals used on food crops are still present in the products on sale in the greengrocers, but really who needed scientists to tell us that? We know that plants absorb energy and water from the soil, rain (or other liquids which land on them), and the air. They just suck it up through their roots (and sometimes their leaves). What they take in becomes part of the plant, its fruit and seeds.

Although the levels of pesticides in a herb used in cooking, say, may be low enough that we needn't be concerned about putting a pinch into a meal intended for several people, and further watered down by the meal itself, there is a big difference when it comes to remedies.

Remedies use comparatively large quantities of plant material, and are prepared in a way that concentrates the plant extracts. The active constituents of any remedy are themselves chemicals, and it isn't surprising that these chemicals interreact with foreign chemicals such as pesticides. This interreaction may be entirely benign, of course, but it's more likely that at the least the efficacy of the remedy will be reduced, and in some cases the result may be that the effects are entirely changed.

For this reason, **it's really only safe to grow herbs or other plants for medicinal use organically.**

Organic gardening really just means that instead of pesticides, you might cover the crop with fleece, and instead of chemical fertilizers, you use natural ones. Most herbs don't need any fertilization or pest control, anyway. They contain volatile oils that tend to be unpalatable to most pests, and often grow best in poor soil, because they are closer to their wild cousins than many other plants.

Safety First

Herbs may not look much in many cases but many of them are potentially deadly. If you have them in your garden, and you have kids (or you ever allow children into your garden), you need to know this stuff. One or two are so poisonous, you could die ***just from handling them too much***. So never use a herb unless you're sure of its identification.

Before using any remedy for the first time, it's best to do a **patch test** by putting a small quantity of the oil or cream to be tested, about the size of a penny, on an area of skin such as the inner forearm, where it is unlikely to be affected by anything else. Leave it for 24 hours and if there is no adverse reaction, then you can go ahead and use the product.

Remedies in this book which can be used during pregnancy

It's ok to use a pinch of some herb in cooking, even if you're pregnant, but when it comes to using them for remedies, the quantities used are much greater and the concentration very much higher. **Most herbs are not recommended for use by pregnant women.**

Only six of the remedies listed in this issue are ok to use as remedies when you're pregnant. These are [ajowan](#), [crab apple](#), [lungwort](#), [plantain](#), [goat's rue](#) and [blessed milk thistle](#).

Please remember we're all different; if you use any of the herbs listed here as safe and get some sort of adverse reaction, stop using it, and don't use it again either in medicine or food until after the birth. It's a good idea to allow 6 weeks after the birth before carefully reintroducing the offending herb to your diet, so that your hormones are back to normal levels (which may be the problem), keeping an eye out for further reactions, and making a decision as to future use accordingly. Sometimes, pregnancy can act as a trigger, activating an intolerance we weren't aware of before, and in other cases you just find that some things upset you while you're pregnant and are fine once you've had the baby.

Ajowan

(Ajwain, Bishop's Weed, Carom, Ethiopian Caraway, Ethiopian Cumin or Kummel)

Trachyspermum ammi syn. *Ammi copticum*, *Carum ajowan*, *C. copticum*, *Sison ammi* and *T. copticum*, *Apiaceae*



Photo: Bames24

Half-hardy annual. 30-90cm (1-3') x 30-45cm (12-18"), Full sun, any moist soil.

The herb is included here because of its alternate name bishop's weed. It shares this name with several other plants: ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*), toothpickweed (*Ammi visnaga*) and [*Ammi majus*](#) - all of which are in the same family, but not closely related - and chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*), which is completely unrelated. It's also not closely related to caraway or cumin, although, again, these are in the same family.

Ajowan is a tender crop, requiring minimum temperatures of 10-15°C (50-60°F). Sow individually pots or plugs under cover to minimize root disturbance, plant out when night temperatures can be relied on to stay within the range.

Collect ripe fruit, rub between your hands to release seeds, which can be distilled for oil or dried for later use.

Standard infusion: 2 tsp bruised seeds/1 tsp powdered seeds to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion internally as a **diuretic** and **expectorant** and to treat **respiratory and digestive infections, asthma, colic, diarrhea, edema, flatulence ("gas" or "wind"), muscle spasms, rheumatism** and **arthritis**. It can also be used externally as an **antiseptic** and to treat **skin infections**.

Carry powdered seed tied tightly in a thin cloth to treat **migraine** headaches and heavy **colds** by inhaling the aroma frequently throughout the day.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Ajowan essential oil should be reserved for use by professional aromatherapists. May cause irritation. Used for **catarrh, colic, flatulence, indigestion**, as an **appetite stimulant**, to **improve circulation** and **promote sleep**.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The seeds taste like a fiery mixture of cumin and thyme and are used for breads and pastries, beans, lentils and chick peas, in curries, pickles, confectionery and beverages. In India, they are used to flavor milk, which is then fed to babies.

In the Garden

Treatment plant: fungicide.

Other

The essential oil is used in epoxy resin manufacture and perfumery.

Crab Apple or Ping Guo

Malus domestica syn. *M. malus*, *M. pumila*, *M.p. var. domestica*, *M. sylvestris*, *M.s. var. domestica* and *Pyrus malus*, Rosaceae



Hardy tree. 10m (30'), Full sun or semi-shade, moist well drained soil. Tolerates heavy clay.

The herb is included here because it is one of the nine sacred herbs of Wicca.

Normally grown in open ground; choose a dwarf rootstock for ease of picking, particularly if growing in a container. You could also grow one from an apple pip, but it will be a few years before you get any fruit! Usually grown as an ornamental, crab apple trees require little attention beyond watering in dry spells and a good feed every year or so.

Collect ripe red fruits for dye or medicinal use when available in Fall.

Note: **The pips are poisonous** (as are the pips of regular apples), though you would have to eat a fair number to notice (I think many of us have done so by accident with no ill effects).

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/15g dried leaves or 15g bark (preferably root bark) to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

Use a standard infusion of leaves to **inhibit bacterial growth**.

An infusion of bark is **anti-parasitic** and can also be used to **reduce fevers**.

The fruit can be eaten raw or cooked to prevent or relieve **constipation**.

Make a poultice of fruit pulp for **inflamed skin, cuts and grazes**.

Crab apple Bach Flower Remedy is used to **restore (mental/emotional) balance**. It is useful for **restlessness, fidgeting** and **OCD**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Tea from leaves. The fruit contains large quantities of pectin, so it's used with other fruit to make preserves - called jelly in the US, and jam in the UK. It can also be stewed, eaten raw or used for juice, though most varieties are quite sour and will require added sugar to make them palatable.

Other

Dyes from fruit and bark.

Thorn Apple

(Angel's Trumpet, Devil's Trumpet, False Caster Oil, Jimson/Jamestown Weed, Man Tuo Luo, Moonflower or Purple Thorn Apple)

Datura stramonium syn. *D. inermis*, *D.s.* var. *chalybea*, *D.s.* var. *tatula* and *D. tatula*, *Solanaceae*



Half-hardy annual, 1.5m (4'6") x 1m (3'), Full sun, well drained soil. Has a very strong unpleasant smell so site away from the house and seating areas.

The herb is included here because of its alternate name Angel's Trumpet.

Thorn apple is not related to the castor oil plant or other plants called moonflower (all in different families to it and each other). It is in the

same family as [ashwagandha](#), deadly nightshade, eggplant (aubergine), sweet pepper, chilli pepper, tomato and potato.

Sow 3 seeds to a pot in early Spring under cover, thin to one. Plant out late Spring/early Summer.

Harvest leaves when the plant is in full flower and dry for later use.

Cultivation is restricted as a noxious weed in several US states and certain other countries. Keep away from *Solanaceae* crops (eg. tomato, eggplant/aubergine, pepper, potato).

NB: All parts of this plant are very poisonous. Only suitable for use by registered medical practitioners.

Use of this plant is illegal in some countries — check local laws. Use with extreme caution and only if alternative remedies are not available.

It is used internally for **asthma**, **fever** from inflammations, pain from **intestinal parasites** and **Parkinson's disease**, and externally for **abscesses**, **dandruff**, **fistulas** and severe **neuralgia**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Companion plant: pumpkin.

Pest deterrent: insects.

Ashwagandha

(Winter Cherry or Indian Ginseng)

Withania somnifera syn. *Physalis somnifera*, *W. kansuensis* and *W. microphysalis*, *Solanaceae*



Tender evergreen shrub. 1m (3') x 50cm (18"), Full sun, any well drained moist soil.

This herb is included here because it is the premier sacred Ayurvedic herb of Hinduism.

It is not related to Chinese or American ginseng or to cherries which grow on trees. It is in the same botanical family as [thorn apple](#) and ground cherry (*Physalis pruinosa*).

Ashwagandha is an evergreen shrub but is not hardy, only able to withstand temperatures down to about freezing point. In temperate areas, it should be grown as an annual or as a subject for the conservatory (though the roots will require a deep pot).

Harvest roots in fall, pare off bark, discard inner part and dry for later use.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant or breastfeeding women, or by anyone trying for a baby. May induce dependency. Do not use in large amounts or over an extended period. Do not eat any part of the plant. **Toxic if eaten.**

Decoction: 1 tsp root bark to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water. Simmer for 15 minutes.

Dosage: up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

In India Ashwagandha is as well regarded as ginseng in China, but there is no actual research evidence for any of the purposes given here. It is a natural **tranquillizer** because of its **strong sedative** effect, used to treat **chronic fatigue, debility, insomnia** and **nervous exhaustion**. It is a very good **tonic** particularly effective for **reproductive problems** (**impotence, infertility, spermatorrhea**, and recovery from **birth or miscarriage**) and is also used for **acne** and other **inflammatory skin conditions, arthritis, bone weakness, constipation, failure to thrive** in children*, **loose teeth, memory loss, multiple sclerosis, premature ageing, muscle weakness, rheumatism, senility, tension, tumors, wasting diseases** and for **convalescence**. The most important use is to increase the amount of hormones secreted by the **thyroid**, and it can also be used to support the **adrenals**.

* Note that in the West, failure to thrive in children is usually taken as a symptom of celiac disease. Do get a proper diagnosis from the doctor!

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Pest repellent: insects.

Other

Fruit is rich in saponins and can be used as soap.

Barberry

(Common Barberry, European Barberry, Holy Thorn, Jaundice Berry, Pepperidge Bush, Piprage or Sowberry)

Berberis vulgaris syn. *B. abortiva*, *B. acida*, *B. alba*, *B. bigelovii*, *B. globularis*, *B. jacquinii* and *B. sanguinea*, Berberidaceae



Hardy shrub. 3m (9') x 2m (6') wide, Full sun or partial shade, any soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Holy Thorn. This name is used in Italy, where it is believed that it was used for the Crown of Thorns placed on the head of Jesus Christ on the way to his crucifixion.

In rural areas near wheat fields growing this plant may make you unpopular with farmers, as it is the alternate host for wheat rust. It is propagated by seed sown in Spring, ripe cuttings taken in Fall and

planted in a cold frame in sandy soil, or by suckers — which are prolific and should be removed regularly if not required, or the plant may become invasive.

Cut whole plants for dye. Harvest bark in Summer for medicinal use, taking care not to ring parts you wish to stay alive. Lift plants in Fall to harvest roots, peel off bark and discard the inner part. Collect flowers from May to June. Harvest ripe fruit in September or October. Pick leaves as required, the main harvest before they turn color in Fall — don't pick them all except from plants you don't want, as the plant retrieves nutrients from the leaves before they drop. All parts can be dried for later use.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women. Do not eat bark: poisonous at doses of 4mg+.

Bark or root bark infusion: 15g (½ ounce) bark or root bark to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water. **Discard bark after straining; do not eat.** Will not work if taken at the same time as licorice.

Other infusions: 3 handfuls fresh/15g (½ ounce) dried leaves, flowers or fruit to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage (all): Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses. For bark and root bark, halve quantity for children.

Use a bark infusion for **jaundice**, **severe indigestion** and as a **general tonic**.

A root bark infusion is **antibacterial** and **anti-tumor** and is used for **diarrhea** and to **induce sweating**.

Externally it can be used to treat **conjunctivitis**, **sore eyes** and **eyelids**

A root bark tincture can be used to treat **rheumatism** and **sciatica**.

A flower infusion is used for **rheumatic conditions**.

The leaf infusion is used to treat **coughs**.

The fruit infusion is **antiseptic, diuretic, expectorant** and **laxative**.

Eat the fruit, or drink the fresh juice, for **liver and gall bladder problems, kidney stones** and **painful periods**.

Barberry is used in homeopathy for **kidney and liver problems, malaria**, and **opiate withdrawal**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Tea from dried young leaves and shoot tips. The fruit has a high vitamin C content and can be eaten raw or cooked (mainly in preserves) or made into a refreshing drink. Young leaves can be used for flavoring like sorrel.

In the Garden

Hedge plant (not for extreme maritime exposure).

Other

Yellow dye from the roots, bark and stem.
Dried unripe fruit can be made into beads.
Wood for carving, toothpicks and for fuel.

Common Chamomile

(Camomile, Corn Chamomile, English Chamomile, Garden Chamomile, Ground Apple, Lawn Chamomile, Low Chamomile, Noble Chamomile, Roman Chamomile, Russian Chamomile, Sweet Chamomile or Whig Plant)

Chamaemelum nobile syn. *Anthemis nobilis* and *Ormenis nobilis*,
Asteraceae



Hardy perennial. 15cm (6") x 45cm (18"), Full sun and light, well drained soil. The variety used for lawns is 'Treneague' — it does not flower.

This herb is included here because it is one of the nine sacred herbs of Wicca.

Sow under cover in March, barely cover seed and keep moist. Prick out into individual pots and plant in permanent position in Summer.

Can also be propagated by division in Spring or Fall.

Gather flowers in Summer and distill for oil or dry. **Replace stocks of dried flowers annually.**

Standard infusion: 1 tbsp fresh/2 tsp dried flowers to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.

Adult dosage: Up to 1 cup a day, split into 3 doses.

Safe for young children. A teaspoonful when required, no more than 2 teaspoonfuls an hour can be used to treat **colic**, **flatulence** and **indigestion** in children.

Use a standard infusion to treat **ulcers**, **expel parasites** and as a **general tonic**. It can also be used to **clean open sores and wounds**, as a **face wash** to clarify the complexion, and as a **hair rinse** to lighten hair.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Note that use of the essential oil is restricted in some countries. The essential oil is usually labeled Roman Chamomile and is known to lower mental concentration. **NB: It is not suitable for pregnant women or anyone who drives or operates machinery.** It is used mainly for **inflammatory disorders** and **skin conditions**.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Young shoots as a seasoning; fresh or dried flowers for herb teas; whole plants as flavoring in herb beer.

In the Garden

Attractive to bees and hoverflies.

Companion plant: brassicas, cucumber, mint, onion.

Predator host: hoverflies, beneficial wasps.

Treatment plant: (infusion) damping off in seedlings. Reputed to aid ailing plants if planted nearby.

Compost activator.

Other

Dye plant. Herb pillows. pot pourri (fragrance and color). An ingredient in herbal tobacco.

Passion Flower

(Apricot Vine, Maypop or Maypop Passionflower)

Passiflora incarnata, *Passifloraceae*



Photo: Kugaloo

Evergreen climber. 6m (20'), Full sun, any moist well drained soil. Provide support. Resistant to honey fungus.

This plant is included here because Christian missionaries used it as a teaching aid, using different parts to represent:

Vines - whips used for flagellation of Christ.

Flower filaments - Crown of Thorns;

10 petals - the ten faithful apostles (exc. Peter and Judas);

5 anthers - five sacred wounds of Christ;

3 stigmas - crucifixion nails/stigmata;

Ovary - Holy Grail;

Blue/white color - heaven or purity.

Restricted as a noxious weed in Texas, USA.

Sow seed which has been soaked in warm water for 12 hours in late Winter/early Spring in a heated greenhouse or propagator. Germination may take up to 12 months. Prick out and pot on when large enough to handle. Overwinter and plant out in late Spring/early Summer, after the last frost date. Can also be propagated with 15cm heeled soft cuttings or leaf bud cuttings in Spring or hardwood cuttings in early Summer.

Restrict roots to encourage fruit production. Hand pollinate. In areas with cold winters, top growth will be cut back by frost, so it is generally cut back beforehand and treated as a herbaceous perennial. Mulch roots in Fall to protect from frost.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/15g dried leaves and stems to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

A standard infusion is used for **insomnia, irritability, irritable bowel syndrome, nervous tension, neuralgia, PMT and vaginal discharge.**

A poultice of the roots can be used for **boils, inflammation, cuts and grazes.**

Approved in Germany for **nervousness** and **insomnia.**

Used in homeopathy for **addiction, asthma, convulsions** and **insomnia.**

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Passion flower seed oil is used as a carrier oil. **NB: It is not suitable for use by pregnant women.** Use within 18 months.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Fruit is high in niacin and can be eaten raw, or cooked in preserves. Leaves can be used in salad or as a cooked vegetable. The flowers can be used to make syrup or cooked as a vegetable.

Other

Ornamental.

Frankincense

(Olibanum Tree or Ru Xiang Shu)

Boswellia sacra syn. *B. carteri* and *B. undulato crenata*, *Burseraceae*



Tender tree, usually multi-stemmed. 8m (25'), Full sun, prefers an alkaline soil.

This plant is included here both because its resin was one of the gifts given to the infant Jesus Christ by the wandering magi, and because it has traditionally been used in (high) churches and other places of worship as a fumigant. It is still used in religious rituals by Parsees. It was also used in the Temple incense described in the Bible.

Frankincense is a tree with an ancient history going back into the mists of time. This is appropriate, as it grows naturally in "fog oases" in desert areas like Oman, Yemen and other parts of the Arabian peninsula, though it is cultivated in other parts. It will not tolerate frost, so can only be grown outdoors in USDA hardiness zones 10 and 11 or warmer places. However, it can be grown in a container in a frost-free conservatory/sun room, and given some air in the warmer months of the year.

The resin (also called frankincense) is collected by making 5cm (2") slashes in the bark (being careful not to ring the tree) and scraping off what accumulates after it has hardened for about two weeks, then storing for a further 12 weeks before use. The lighter the color, the better quality it is.

It is not the most attractive plant, but does have peeling bark a bit like the paper birch, and would make a good conversation piece, especially at Christmas time.

Frankincense is **antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory** and **anti-cancer**.

Powdered frankincense can be made into a paste and used to treat **wounds**.

In Arab communities, frankincense resin is chewed (like chewing gum) for **gastrointestinal complaints**, for **mouth and gum infections** and to **strengthen teeth and gums**. **NB: Do not swallow, as this may lead to stomach problems.**

Aromatherapy

NB: Frankincense essential oil should not be used by pregnant women (except during labor) or children under 6 years. It is **antiseptic** and is used for **respiratory conditions** including **asthma, bronchitis** and other **coughs and colds**, for **mature, dry or wrinkled skin** and to **remove scars**. It is also used as a **uterine tonic**, for **heavy periods**, to **induce menstruation (emmenagogue)** and as a **birthing aid**.

Other Uses

Other

Used in perfumery. Pot pourri (fragrance).

Hyssop or Shen Xiang Cao

Hyssopus officinalis syn. *H. canescens* and *H.o.* var. *canescens*,
Lamiaceae



Photo: Llez

Hardy perennial. 45-60cm (18-24") x 60-90cm (2-3'), Full sun and well drained to dry, light, limy or neutral soil.

This herb is included here because of the Bible verse, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Psalms 51:7). The herb was sacred both to the Hebrews and the ancient Greeks, who used it to cleanse their temples.

Sow seed in Spring or Fall or take Summer cuttings. Trim hard back in Spring.

Harvest just before flowering, taking leaves and flowering tops. Use dried for infusions etc., or distill for oil.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women or anyone suffering from epilepsy.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g dried leaves and flowering tops to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz), split into 3 doses.

Hyssop is a natural **antiseptic**. A standard infusion can be used internally to treat **bronchitis** and as a **stomach tonic**.

Externally, the infusion can be used as a lotion for **inflamed skin** and **bruises**. It's said to be particularly beneficial for **black eyes** (bruising around the eye).

A poultice made from chopped fresh leaves mixed with a little hot water can be used to treat **wounds**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Hyssop essential oil is not suitable for use by pregnant women, children under 13 years or anyone suffering from epilepsy or hypertension (high blood pressure). It should only be used under the supervision of a qualified aromatherapist.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Leaves, shoots and tops can all be used for tea and for flavoring. Note that the flavor is very strong: use sparingly. Chopped leaves can be used in green salads, beef soups and with pulses (beans, peas, lentils). The flowers are also used in soups.

In the Garden

Attractive to bees and hoverflies.

Companion plant: cabbage, radish. Good anywhere.

Pest deterrent: flea beetles, insect larvae, cabbage whites.

Predator host: hoverflies, beneficial wasps and others.

Treatment plant: cabbage white, other caterpillars.

Other

Pot pourri (fragrance).

Jacob's Ladder

(Charity, Greek Valerian or Jian Lie Hua Ren)

Polemonium caeruleum, Polemoniaceae



Hardy perennial. 30-90cm (1-3') x 30-45cm (12-18"), Full sun or partial shade, moist, well drained fertile soil. Tolerates lush grass.

This herb is included here because of its association with the story of Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:10-19). It's also used in Masonic ritual.

Closely related to American Jacob's ladder (*P. reptans*). Not related to valerian.

Endangered in its natural range. Do not collect from the wild. Sow seed or divide existing stock in Spring. Self-sows.

Cut flowers for drying as everlasting before seed sets to avoid excessive self-sowing. Harvest plants for herbal use in Summer and dry for later use.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g dried leaves and flowers to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Decoction: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day, split into 3 doses.

Rarely used in modern herbalism.

A standard infusion was used for **nervousness** and **agitation**.

The root is **astrigent**, **promotes sweating** and has been used to treat **coughs and colds**, **epilepsy**, **fevers**, **headaches** and **laryngitis**.

In 19th century Europe it was used to treat **syphilis** and **rabies**.

According to Culpeper's Herbal (17th century) "it helps in **nervous complaints**, head-achs, trembling, palpitations of the heart, vapours, and all that train of miserable disorders, included under the name of nervous. It is also good in hysteric cases; and epilepsies have been cured by the use only of this herb."

The ancient Greeks used the root to treat **dysentery**, **toothache** and **animal bites**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

Other

Everlasting. Ornamental. Black hair dye can be made by boiling flowers in olive oil.

Lily of the Valley

(Ling Lan or Our Lady's Tears)

Convallaria majalis syn. *C. keiskei*, *C. montana* and *C. transcaucasica*, *Asparagaceae*



Hardy perennial. 23-30cm (9-12"), Semi-shade to deep shade, rich moist soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Our Lady's Tears.

Though it prefers some shade and rich moist soil, I have grown this plant in full sun on chalk with excellent results. It does not like boggy

areas or pure clay soils. Sow fresh seed when ready (or stored seed in late Winter), thinly in pots in a cold frame. Germination can take up to a year. Allow to grow on for the first year, feeding during the growing season. When dormant, divide into individual pots and grow on for a further year, planting in their final position during the dormant period. Existing stocks can be divided in September.

Pick leaves and flowers and dry for medicinal use at flowering. Cut stems and leaves as required for dye,

Subject to legal restrictions in certain countries.

Poisonous. External use only.

Use ointment externally for **gout, headache** and **rheumatism**.

See [Volume 1](#) for method.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

Other

Ornamental. Everlasting (dry in silica gel). pot pourri (fragrance).

Young leaves with a chrome mordant can be used to dye wool yellow to greenish-yellow. Fall leaves with chrome will dye wool a gold color.

Sacred Lotus

(East Indian Lotus, Lian, Lotus, Lotusroot, Oriental Lotus or Sacred Water Lotus)

Nelumbo nucifera syn. *N. caspica*, *N. komarovii*, *N. nelumbo*, *N. speciosum* and *Nymphaea nelumbo*, *Nelumbonaceae*



Photo: T.Voekler

Perennial hardy to USDA zone 5. 1m (3') x 1m (3'), Full sun, any soil in water.

The lotus is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists. The Buddhist mantra "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus" (*Om Mani Padme Hum*) has many meanings, but the lotus referred to is this one.

At the risk of sounding irreverent, this plant is really just a "posh" waterlily, and requires similar growing conditions, though warmer. It will survive in water from 30cm (1') up to 2.5m (8') deep, but in cooler climates it should be grown in water at the shallower end of this range, as it will warm up quicker. Requires a five month growing

season and prefers a water temperature of 23-27°C. In areas with frosty Winters, plant in aquatic containers and move the roots into a frost-free place after the leaves have died down in Fall; store in a tub of water or in moist sand. On the other hand, in favorable conditions where they stay out all year they can become **invasive**.

Lift roots in Fall or Winter and dry for later use . Collect other parts as required as they become available.

Decoction: 30g fresh root/15g dried root or other parts to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Every little piece of this plant has been used either in medicine or as food. Because there are so many uses, I've broken it down to a quick reference -

leaf juice: **diarrhea**;

decoction of leaves with licorice (*Glycyrrhiza*): **sunstroke**;

decoction of flowers: **premature ejaculation**;

decoction of floral receptacle: **abdominal cramps**;

decoction of fruit: **agitation, fever, heart problems**;

seed: **lowers cholesterol levels, digestive aid, bloody discharges**;

flowers: **heart tonic**;

flower stalk: **bleeding gastric ulcers, post-partum hemorrhage, heavy periods**;

stamens: **chronic diarrhea, premature ejaculation, enteritis, hemolysis, insomnia, leukorrhea, palpitations, spermatorrhea, urinary frequency and uterine bleeding**;

plumule and radicle: **hypertension (high blood pressure), insomnia and restlessness**;

root: **general tonic**;

root starch: **diarrhea, dysentery, hemorrhage, heavy periods and nosebleed**;

root starch paste: externally for **tinea (ringworm) and other skin conditions**;

root nodes: **blood in the urine, hemoptysis, nosebleed and uterine bleeding.**

According to research, the plant also contains **anti-cancer** compounds.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Lotus essential oil is not suitable for pregnant women. It must be diluted before use. It is used for cholera, epilepsy, fever, fungal infections, jaundice, kidney and bladder complaints, skin conditions and as an aphrodisiac.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

All parts are edible. The roots and can be pickled, stored in syrup or cooked Chinese-style giving a result like water chestnut. They are also a source of starch. Young leaves can be used in salad, cooked as a vegetable or used in the same way as vine leaves are used for *dolmades*. Stems can also be peeled and cooked. The seeds contain a bitter embryo (which can be removed before eating), and are pretty nutritious, containing 16% protein and only 3% fat. They can be popped like corn, ground for making bread, eaten raw or cooked, or roasted to use as a coffee substitute. The petals are used as garnish and floated in soups. Finally, the stamens are used as a flavoring additive for tea.

In the Garden

Attractive to bees. Ornamental water plant.

Other

Used for honey production.

Love Lies Bleeding

(Foxtail, Foxtail Amaranth, Inca Wheat, Lao Qiang Gu, Purple Amaranth, Red Hot Cattail, Tassel Flower or English Velvet Flower)

Amaranthus caudatus syn. *A. dussii*, *A. edulis* and *A. mantegazzianus*, *Amaranthaceae*



Photo: Wildfeuer

Half hardy annual. 90-150cm (3-5') x 30-60cm (1-2'), Full sun, well drained poor to average organic soil, good drought tolerance.

This herb is included here because of the name Love Lies Bleeding, which is sometimes used as a metaphor for the love of Jesus Christ.

This species is from the Andes, and prefers a short day length. Sow under cover in early Spring and transplant to final position after last frost date. Can also be propagated from cuttings. If you are growing

this plant for use either medicinally or in the kitchen, it should be given only organic fertilizer, as it has a tendency to concentrate nitrate in the leaves if there is too much nitrogen in the soil.

Pick leaves for culinary use as required. Cut flower spikes for drying, collect seed just before it ripens (4-6 months from sowing) for use in cooking.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women. Love lies bleeding is **anti-parasitic, antiseptic** and **diuretic**. A standard infusion can be used internally for **strangury** and externally for **ulcerated sores**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Red varieties can be used for red food dye. The leaves of organically grown plants only can be used like spinach or added to soups and stews. The seeds have very high nutrient levels (13-18% protein) and can be ground for flour (which is gluten-free) and used in baking, or popped like popcorn.

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Companion plant: onion, potato, sweetcorn.

Predator host: ground beetles.

Other

Everlasting. Yellow and green dyes from the whole plant.

Lungwort

(Bethlehem Sage, Bloody Butcher, Boys and Girls, Hundreds and Thousands, Jerusalem Cowslip, Jerusalem Sage, Joseph and Mary, Mary Spilt the Milk, Soldiers and Sailors or Spotted Dog)

Pulmonaria officinalis syn. *Pulmonaria maculata*, Boraginaceae



Photo: Kpjas
Inset: Fabelfroh

Hardy perennial. 10-30cm (4-12") x 15-30cm (6-12"), Shade, moist soil.

This plant is included here because of its alternate name Joseph and Mary.

An unusual plant, because flowers on a single plant are produced in more than one color. Sow seed in Spring or divide existing stock in Spring or Fall.

Cut plants in early Spring and dry for medicinal use.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g dried leaves and flowering tops to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

A standard infusion can be used to treat **coughs** such as **chronic bronchitis**, **asthma** and **sore throats**, as well as **diarrhea**. Externally, it can be used on **cuts and grazes** and also as a treatment for **hemorrhoids (piles)**.

The leaves can also be used fresh to **stop bleeding (styptic)**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Leaves can be added to salads, used as a pot herb or cooked vegetable.

Other

An ingredient in the drink Vermouth.

European Mistletoe

(European White-Berry Mistletoe, Common Mistletoe, All-Heal, Masslin)

Viscum album, *Viscaceae*



Evergreen hemi-parasitic shrub. 1m (3') x 1m (3'), Full sun or semi-shade, grows on trees 20 years old or more, especially apple, hawthorn, lime, oak and poplar.

Mistletoe is sacred to modern Pagans. It is also believed to have been sacred to the Druids, though this may be a Victorian invention. It is hung up at Christmas as a plant to kiss under, though there is no biblical text relating to this; a berry is picked for each kiss.

Not related to other plants called allheal. Not closely related to American mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) or dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*), but in the same family.

Propagation is hit and miss. Obtain ripe berries in late Fall or early Winter, make wounds in the bark on the underside of a strong branch of the tree/s you wish to use and squash the berries into them.

Harvest leaves and young twigs just before the berries form and dry for later use.

Because of the potential side effects, this plant should only be used internally under the guidance of a skilled practitioner.

Do not eat berries or leaves. If 6-20 berries or 4-5 leaves of this plant are eaten, use activated charcoal or ipecac to induce vomiting. For larger or unknown doses a visit to your local emergency room (casualty) is advised (American mistletoe is more toxic, even a single berry or leaf may cause serious symptoms). Possible symptoms of overdose, which appear within 6 hours, are nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure and dizziness. Ingestion of American mistletoe may cause ataxia or seizure in young children.

NB: Mistletoe is not suitable for use by pregnant or breast-feeding women or children under 12 years. Do not exceed the dose recommended by your practitioner.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g dried berries and leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Mistletoe is **anti-cancer, antispasmodic, diuretic, hypotensive, nervine, stimulant** and a **vasodilator**. It is used for **anxiety, high blood pressure, cancer** of the stomach, lungs and ovaries, **convulsions** and **epilepsy, headaches, internal hemorrhage, palpitations, panic attacks**, to **improve concentration** and **promote sleep**.

Externally, it is used to treat **arthritis, chilblains, rheumatism, leg ulcers** and **varicose veins**.

Approved in Germany for **rheumatism**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

A product called mistletoe essential oil is on sale. However, it does not contain any mistletoe but is in fact a blend of essential oils of anise, coriander, fennel, clove, oregano, peppermint and wormwood.

Other Uses

None known.

Common Plantain

(Broadleaf Plantain, Greater Plantain or Large Plantain)

Plantago major, *Plantaginaceae*



Photo: Llez

Hardy perennial. 10cm (4") x 10cm (4"), Full sun, any well drained soil.

This herb is included here because it is one of the nine sacred herbs of Wicca.

You probably won't need to propagate this, as it's a common garden weed (though ornamental forms are available). However, if you do need to, simply sow the seeds where you want them to be in late Spring.

Pick leaves as required for medicinal use. Collect seeds when ripe from July to October.

NB: Not suitable for anyone suffering from intestinal obstruction.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Decoction: 15g (a half ounce) seeds to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Use a standard infusion internally for **asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, diarrhea, gastritis, hay fever, irritable bowel syndrome, hemorrhoids (piles), cystitis, peptic ulcers** and **sinusitis**.

Externally, it is used for **cuts and grazes, malignant ulcers** and **inflammation of the skin**.

Use a decoction to treat **internal parasites**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Plantain essential oil is used for **bruises, insect bites, rashes, scarring, irritated skin, splinters, strained ligaments, muscles and tendons** and also as a gentle massage oil.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to wildlife.

In the Kitchen

Young leaves are edible raw or cooked in an emergency, too fibrous for daily use, remove the leaf-stalk before use. Seed can be boiled and used like sago. Dried leaves for tea. Root is also edible.

Common Rue

(Garden Rue or Herb of Grace)

Ruta graveolens, Rutaceae



Photo: Kurt Stüber

Hardy perennial. 60cm (2') x 45cm (18"), Full sun, Light well-drained poor soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Herb of Grace.

Irritant — may cause blistering. Avoid handling in strong sunlight. Sow shallowly from April to May. Transplant into individual pots and allow to grow on indoors. Plant out the following Spring. Can be propagated by cuttings in Summer. Cut back close to the main stem in Spring.

Pick young shoots and tops in Spring and Summer before flowering for immediate use or drying. Wear gloves: skin irritant. May cause blisters in sunlight.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women or women trying to conceive.

Tisane: 1 tsp fresh or ½ tsp dried herb/125 ml (½ US cup, 4 fl oz) boiling water for 10 minutes.

Cold extract: 2 tsp fresh/1 tsp dried herb to 190 ml (¾ US cup, 6 fl oz) water for 10 hours.

Dosage (tisane): 125ml (½ US cup, 4 fl oz) per day; *(cold extract):* 185ml (¾ US cup, 6 fl oz) per day.

Use a tisane or cold extract to treat **gout** and to **induce menstruation (emmenagogue)**. It has also been used as an **antidote to poisoning** - but on no account rely solely on any herbal medicine for serious acute problems of this nature - **do not delay to call a doctor or visit your local emergency clinic (casualty) if poisoning is suspected.**

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Rue essential oil is toxic and should not be used under any circumstances.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Rue has a very strong flavor, but is sometimes used with shellfish and other dishes, also in dill pickles. Follow recipes carefully and use sparingly.

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Companion plant: raspberry, rose.

Pest deterrent: beetles, fleas, Japanese beetle.

Other

Everlasting. Dye plant.

(European) Goat's Rue

(Cheese Rennet, French Lilac, Galega, Holy Hay, Italian Fitch or Professor Weed)

Galega officinalis syn. *Galega bicolor*, *G. patula*, *G. persica* and *G. tricolor*, *Papilionaceae*



Hardy perennial. 100-150cm (3-5') x 2-3m (6-10'), Full sun or partial shade, moist, well drained soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Holy Hay.

Not related to American goat's rue (*Tephrosia virginiana*).

Restricted as a noxious weed in several US states.

Propagate by seed sown in Spring or by division in Spring or Fall.

Harvest whole plants as flowering begins.

Standard infusion: 2 tsp fresh/1 tsp dried leaves to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 85ml (one third US cup, 3 fl oz) up to 3 times a day

Use a standard infusion to **increase milk flow** (can be safely used during the final month of pregnancy), both in human mothers and in dairy cattle. It is also one of the herbs which can be used to **lower blood sugar levels**, an **appetite stimulant** and **digestive tonic**, and is extremely useful for treating **chronic constipation**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Attractive to bees.

Other

Used to increase milk yield in cattle.

Used for honey production.

Solomon's Seal

(Angular Solomon's Seal, Aromatic Solomon's Seal or Yu Zhu)

Polygonatum odoratum syn. *Convallaria odorata*, *P. japonicum* and *P. officinale*, *Convallariaceae*



Hardy perennial. 90cm (3') x 45cm (18"), Partial shade, well drained moist soil.

Solomon was the son of David, king of Israel from 990 BCE to 968 BCE. The name Solomon's Seal was given because the scar left by breaking the stem from the rhizome resembles the Star of David or Seal of Solomon. It is used in Kabbalistic ritual.

Not closely related to plants in the genus *Mainthemum* (also called Solomon's seal), but in the same family.

Sow ripe seed in early Fall or divide existing stock in early Spring.

Lift rhizomes in Fall for use fresh or dried.

NB: Not for internal use except by a registered practitioner.

The roots are used as a poultice for **bruises, inflammation** and **wounds**.

Root tea is used externally as a **skin wash** (which apparently removes freckles), and an **antidote to poison ivy**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Young shoots can be used like asparagus. Fruits are harmful if eaten.

In the Garden

Ornamental.

Southernwood

(Lad's Love, Old Man, Maid's Ruin, Lemon Plant, Slovenwood, Southern Wormwood or Our Lord's Wood)

Artemisia abrotanum syn. *A. procera*, Asteraceae



Hardy perennial. 1m (3') x 30-60cm (1-2'), Full sun, well drained poor non-acid soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Our Lord's Wood. It is closely related to [wormwood](#).

Propagate by stem cuttings or by division in Spring or Fall.

Pick leaves before flowering and dry

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls fresh/30g dried leaves to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Use a standard infusion for **poor appetite, hair loss, indigestion** and as a **liver tonic**. Apply externally for **frostbite, hair loss, sciatica** and **splinters**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Southernwood essential oil is toxic. Do not use under any circumstances. Used in small amounts in perfumery.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The young shoots can be used for tea or as flavoring for cakes and vinegar.

In the Garden

Can be grown as a hedging plant.

Companion plant: cabbage, fruit trees.

Pest deterrent: cabbage moths, carrot flies, fruit tree moths, deer.

Treatment plant: cabbage whites.

Other

Moth, and and general insect deterrent; can be rubbed on skin or dried and left around the house. Dye plant. Leaves in pot pourri (fragrance).

Blessed Milk Thistle

(Bull Thistle, Gundagai Thistle, Holy Thistle, Lady's Thistle, Milk Thistle, Variegated Artichoke or Variegated Thistle)

Silybum marianum syn. *Carduus marianus*, Asteraceae



Hardy perennial. 120cm (4') x 60cm (2'), Full sun, well drained soil.

This herb is included here because of the names Blessed Milk Thistle, Holy Thistle and Lady's Thistle (the lady in this case being Mary, mother of Jesus Christ); the specific latin name means Mary's. The white patterning on the leaves is said to resemble spilt milk.

In the same family as St Benedict's thistle (also called blessed thistle), but not closely related.

Invasive. Restricted as a noxious weed in some US states.

Sow in Spring, early Summer or Fall.

Collect ripe seeds and cut whole plants when flowering. All parts are dried

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh plants/30g dried to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Boosts the **immune system**. Used for **diseases of the liver and gall bladder** including **hepatitis** and **cirrhosis**.

Research shows seed extract (silymarin) improves **liver regeneration** in **hepatitis**, **cirrhosis**, **mushroom poisoning** and other **diseases of the liver**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women or nursing mothers. Do not use internally except under the instruction of a qualified aromatherapist. Used for **liver diseases**, **liver regeneration**, **pms** and to alleviate **chemotherapy side effects**.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Attractive to bees. Green manure.

In the Kitchen

Flavoring. Roots, young leaves (remove spines) and young stems (peeled and soaked to remove bitterness) in salads; cooked roots are like salsify; cooked leaves like spinach; cooked flower buds like small globe artichokes; cooked young stems like asparagus or rhubarb; roasted seed is a coffee substitute.

Other

Used for honey production.

St. Benedict's Thistle

(Blessed Thistle, Bitter Thistle or Cang Ye Hua)

Centaurea benedicta syn. *Carduus benedictus*, *Carbenia benedicta*
and *Cnicus benedictus*, Asteraceae

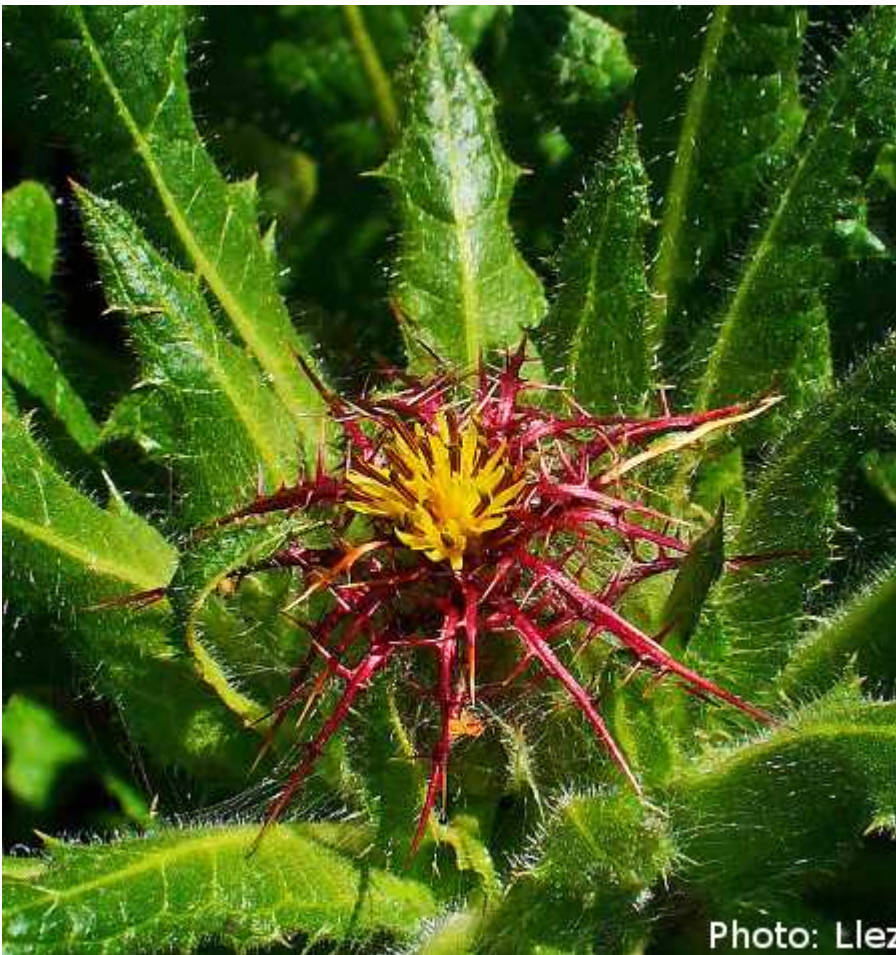


Photo: Llez

Hardy annual. 65cm (26") x 30cm (12"), Full sun, well drained soil.
Grows best in well manured soil.

This herb is included here because of the names St Benedict's Thistle and Holy Thistle. I can't find anything to connect St Benedict with a thistle, so where the name came from is anyone's guess.

In the same family as blessed milk thistle (also called blessed thistle), but not closely related.

Restricted as a noxious weed in seven US states.

Propagate by seed sown in Spring.

Cut whole plant when in flower.

NB: Not suitable for anyone taking anticoagulants or who is suffering from gastritis or heartburn.

Standard infusion: 1 handful fresh plants/10g dried to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day. Do not exceed the stated dose.

Boosts immune system.

Use a standard infusion internally for **anorexia** and **chest infections**.

Use a standard infusion or extract externally for **cuts and grazes** and **external ulcers**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Young leaves in salad; flower buds like small globe artichokes; boiled roots as a potherb.

Common Vervain

(Common Verbena, European Vervain, Herb of the Cross, Holywort, Ma Bian Cao, Official Vervain, Peristerion Wort, Pigeon's Grass, Simpler's Joy, Turkey Grass or Wild Verbena)

Verbena officinalis syn. *V. domingensis*, *V. gaudichaudii*, *V. macrostachya*, *V. riparia* and *V. russellii*, *Verbenaceae*



Photo: Denis Barthel

Hardy perennial. 80cm (32") x 60cm (2'), Full sun, well drained, moist soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate names Herb of the Cross and Holywort. It is closely related to blue vervain. Not closely related to lemon verbena (*Aloysia citrodora*, also known as common verbena), but in the same family.

Divide existing stock in Spring or sow under cover in Spring or Fall, transplant after last frost in Spring. Pinch out tips to encourage

branching.

Cut plants as flowering begins and dry.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women except during labor.

Standard infusion: 3 handfuls of fresh/30g dried plants to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

Use a standard infusion internally to treat **asthma, depression, liver and gall bladder problems** and **migraine**.

Use externally for **cuts and grazes, eczema, neuralgia** and as a hair rinse.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Vervain essential oil is **NB: Not suitable for pregnant or breast-feeding women**. Do not use undiluted. Use with caution and dilute with a suitable carrier oil before adding to bathwater or using for massage or direct application to the skin. It is used for **anxiety/depression, insomnia, nervous fatigue, stress** and as a **heart tonic**.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The leaves are used to make tea, and the flowers as garnish.

Bishop's Weed

(Greater Ammi, Bullwort, Laceflower, Lady's Lace or False Bishop's Weed)

Ammi majus syn. *A. glaucifolium* and *A. ammi* var. *glaucifolium*,
Apiaceae



Hardy annual. 1m (3') x 50cm (20"), Full sun or semi-shade, any moist well drained soil.

This herb is included here because of the name Bishop's Weed.

Four other plants (possibly more) are sometimes called bishop's weed: the closely related toothpickweed (*Ammi visnaga*), [ajowan](#) and ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) which are in the same family but not closely related, and the completely unrelated chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*).

Resembles its poisonous relative hemlock, so **should not be collected from the wild.**

For best results, sow where you wish it to flower in Fall.

Collect ripe seeds from August to October, dig roots before the plant dies back completely in October or November.

Some countries have legal restrictions affecting this plant.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Some people may experience photo-sensitivity and/or dermatitis if their skin comes into direct contact with the sap.

Standard infusion: 2 tsp crushed seeds to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Decoction: 15g crushed root to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage (both): up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) per day, split into 3 doses. Do not exceed the stated dose.

The root and seeds contain 8-methoxypsoralen, which is used in conventional medicine to treat **vitiligo (piebald skin)** and **psoriasis**. However, **it should only be used for these purposes by practitioners who are specialists in this area**, since it will require treatment over a period of time.

The infusion and decoction are not interchangeable, as they are used for completely different purposes.

A standard infusion is used to treat **asthma, angina, "gippy tummy"** (that sort of stomach-churning sensation), and as a **diuretic** and **tonic**.

A decoction is said to be the herbal equivalent of the "**morning after pill**", preventing fertilized eggs from being implanted in the womb.

In India, bishop's weed is used to treat **vitiligo** and **psoriasis**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

The seeds are used as a condiment.

Sweet Woodruff

(Our Lady's Lace or Sweet scented Bedstraw)

Galium odoratum syn. *Asperula odorata*, Rubiaceae



Photo: Kurt Stüber

Hardy perennial. 15cm (6") x 45cm (18"), Shade, moist well drained neutral to alkaline soil.

This herb is included here because of its alternate name Our Lady's Lace.

Sow freshly ripened seed direct in late Summer or divide existing stock in Spring or Fall. Keep well watered.

Cut whole plants when flowering and dry. Collect seeds when ripe.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women.

Decoction: 30g fresh/15g dried herb to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

A decoction used to treat **varicose veins** and childhood **insomnia**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

Not used.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Ornamental.

In the Kitchen

Flavoring. Leaves in salad/fruit salad or cooked; flowers in salad or as garnish; tea from wilted leaves. In Alsace, it is steeped in white wine to produce a tonic called Maitrank.

Other

Pot pourri (fragrance). Dye plant.

Wormwood

(Absinthe Wormwood or Grand Wormwood)

Artemisia absinthium, Asteraceae



Hardy perennial. 1m (3') x 60-90cm (2-3'), Sun, Light soil.

This herb is included here because it is the name of the star cast down to earth in Revelation 8:10-11. Closely related to southernwood.

Sow ripe seed in Fall or propagate by division or cuttings in Fall. Plant about 60cm (2') apart. Keep plant away from everything else: hinders plant growth and discourages earthworms. **Do not compost.**

Cut green leaves any time and tops on a dry day when the plants are in flower, and dry.

NB: Not suitable for pregnant women.

Decoction: 1 handful fresh/10g dried plants to 500ml (2 US cups, 16 fl oz) water.

Dosage: **For short term use only.** Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

A decoction is used in small doses for **indigestion** and to treat **roundworms**. Can also be used externally for **bites** and **bruises**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: Wormwood essential oil is a neurotoxin. Do not use under any circumstances.

Other Uses

In the Garden

Do not compost.

Pest deterrent: general insecticide, mice and other rodents, slugs and snails. Chopped leaves deter cabbage caterpillars. As a border, keeps animals out.

Treatment plant: aphids, fleas, rust.

Other

Everlasting.

St. John's Wort

(Goat Weed, Hypericum, Klamath Weed, Perforate St. John's-Wort, Racecourseweed, Tipton's Weed or Guan Ye Lian Qiao)

Hypericum perforatum syn. *Hypericum vulgare*, Hypericaceae



Hardy perennial. 30-60cm (1-2') x 15-45cm (6-18"), Full sun or semi-shade, light dry soil.

This herb is included here because of its name St John's Wort. It is so called because it flowers around 24 June, which is St John's Day and was celebrated as Midsummer Day in the first century.

Cultivation restricted in certain countries and in nine US states as a noxious weed.

Sow freshly ripened seed under cover in Fall, prick out into individual pots and grow on under cover. Plant out in Summer into dry light soil. Can also be propagated by division in Spring or Fall.

Cut plants as flowering begins and use fresh or dried for medicinal purposes, Cut top parts as required for dye.



Photo: Migas

The specific name *perforata* was given because of these minute holes in the leaves.

NB: Not suitable for use by pregnant women or who are taking contraceptive tablets. Wear gloves when handling - may cause skin allergies. Avoid sunbathing and sunbeds/tanning machines while taking St John's Wort.

Standard infusion: 2-3 tsp fresh or 1-2 tsp dried chopped flowering tops/250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) water.

Dosage: Up to 250ml (1 US cup, 8 fl oz) a day.

In Germany, the herb is prescribed for **depression**, but herbalists use it mainly for **neuritis (inflammation of the nerves)**. It is

antiviral and also helps **prevent hemorrhages**, and can be used to treat **bedwetting**, **bladder problems** and **diarrhea** and externally to treat **blisters**, **scalds and minor wounds**, as well as **sunburn**.

See [Volume 1](#) for methods.

Aromatherapy

NB: St John's Wort essential oil is toxic. Do not use under any circumstances.

Other Uses

In the Kitchen

Harmful if eaten.

Other

Yellow, gold, brown and red dyes from flowers and leaves. The flowering tops with alum yield a yellow dye for wool.

If you liked this book, please [let others know](#) by leaving a review.

Other books in this series:

- Volume 1: [Home Remedies and How to Make Them](#)
- Volume 2: [Home Remedies from Culinary Herbs and Spices](#)
- Volume 3: [Healing Herbs in Pots and Containers](#)
- Volume 4: [Natural Remedies from Salad Herbs](#)
- Volume 5: [Healing Herbs for the Ornamental Garden](#)
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If you're interested in health and nutrition you may find these pages worth a visit:

[Herbal Medicine From Your Garden](#)

[Guide to Aromatherapy.](#)

[Are You Gluten Intolerant? 5-question multiple choice quiz](#)

Index of Remedies

**Key: *pregnancy safe, **pregnancy safe (half strength),
***pregnancy safe (2nd & 3rd trimester only), †safe in last
month of pregnancy**

abdominal cramps [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)

abscesses [Thorn Apple, herb](#)

acne [Ashwagandha, herb](#)

addiction [Passion Flower, herb](#)

ageing, premature [Ashwagandha, herb](#)

agitation [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)

angina [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)

anorexia [St Benedict's Thistle, herb](#)

anti-bacterial [Barberry, herb](#); [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Frankincense, herb](#)

anti-cancer [Frankincense, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)

antidote [Rue, herb](#)

antifungal [Frankincense, herb](#)

anti-inflammatory [Frankincense, herb](#)

anti-parasitic [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#)

antiseptic [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Frankincense, essential oil](#);
[Hyssop, herb](#); [Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#)

antispasmodic [European Mistletoe, herb](#)

anti-tumor [Barberry, herb](#)

antiviral [St John's Wort, herb](#)

anxiety/depression [European Mistletoe, herb](#); [Vervain, essential oil](#)

aphrodisiac [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)

appetite stimulant [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#);
[Southernwood, herb](#)

arthritis [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)

asthma [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Bishop's Weed, herb](#); [Plantain, herb*](#);
[Frankincense, essential oil](#); [Lungwort, herb*](#); [Passion Flower, herb](#);
[Thorn Apple, herb](#); [Vervain, herb](#)

astringent [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)

bedwetting [St John's Wort, herb](#)

birthing aid [Frankincense, essential oil](#)

bites, animal [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
bites, insect [Plantain, essential oil](#)
bites [Wormwood, herb](#)
bladder conditions [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#); [St John's Wort, herb](#)
bleeding, stop [Lungwort, herb*](#)
blisters [St John's Wort, herb](#)
blood in the urine [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
blood pressure, high [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
blood sugar, lower [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)
boils [Passion Flower, herb](#)
bone weakness [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
bronchitis [Frankincense, essential oil](#); [Hyssop, herb](#); [Plantain, herb*](#)
bronchitis, chronic [Lungwort, herb*](#)
bruises [Hyssop, herb](#); [Plantain, essential oil](#); [Solomon's Seal, herb](#);
[Wormwood, herb](#)
catarrh [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Plantain, herb*](#)
chemotherapy side effects [Milk Thistle, essential oil](#)
chest infections [St Benedict's Thistle, herb](#)
chilblains [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
cholera [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
cholesterol, lower [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
chronic fatigue [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
circulation, improve [Ajowan, essential oil](#)
cirrhosis [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)
colds [Ajowan, herb*](#)
colic [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Chamomile, herb](#)
concentration, improve [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
conjunctivitis [Barberry, herb](#)
constipation [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
constipation, chronic [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)
contraceptive [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
convalescence [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
convulsions [Passion Flower, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
coughs and colds [Frankincense, essential oil](#); [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
coughs [Barberry, herb](#); [Lungwort, herb*](#)
cuts and grazes [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Chamomile, herb](#); [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Frankincense, herb](#); [Hyssop, herb](#); [Lungwort, herb*](#);

[Plantain, herb*](#); [Solomon's Seal, herb](#); [St Benedict's Thistle, herb](#);
[Vervain, herb](#); [St John's Wort, herb](#)
cystitis [Plantain, herb*](#)
dandruff [Thorn Apple, herb](#)
debility [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
depression [Vervain, herb](#); [St John's Wort, herb](#)
diarrhea [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#);
[Lungwort, herb*](#); [Plantain, herb*](#); [St John's Wort, herb](#)
diarrhea, chronic [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
digestive aid [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
digestive infections [Ajowan, herb*](#)
discharges, bloody [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
diuretic [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#);
[European Mistletoe, herb](#); [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
dysentery [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
eczema [Vervain, herb](#)
edema [Ajowan, herb*](#)
ejaculation, premature [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
emmenagogue [Frankincense, essential oil](#); [Rue, herb](#)
enteritis [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
epilepsy [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
expectorant [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Barberry, herb](#)
eye, black [Hyssop, herb](#)
eyes, sore [Barberry, herb](#)
fever [Thorn Apple, herb](#); [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#);
[Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
fidgeting [Crab Apple, herb*](#)
fistulas [Thorn Apple, herb](#)
flatulence [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Chamomile, herb](#)
frostbite [Southernwood, herb](#)
fungal infections [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
galactagogue [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)
gall bladder conditions [Barberry, herb](#)
gall bladder disease [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)
gall bladder conditions [Vervain, herb](#)
gas [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Chamomile, herb](#)

gastritis [Plantain, herb*](#)
gastrointestinal complaints [Frankincense, herb](#)
gippy tummy [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
gout [Lily of the Valley, herb](#); [Rue, herb](#)
gum infections [Frankincense, herb](#)
gums, strengthen [Frankincense, herb](#)
hair loss [Southernwood, herb](#)
hay fever [Plantain, herb*](#)
headache [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#); [Lily of the Valley, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
heart problems [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
hemolysis [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
hemoptysis [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
hemorrhage [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
hemorrhage, internal [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
hemorrhage, prevent [St John's Wort, herb](#)
hemorrhoids [Lungwort, herb*](#); [Plantain, herb*](#)
hepatitis [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)
hypertension [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
immune system boost [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)
indigestion [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Southernwood, herb](#); [Wormwood, herb](#)
indigestion in children [Chamomile, herb](#)
inflammation [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Solomon's Seal, herb](#)
inflammatory conditions [Roman Chamomile, essential oil](#)
insomnia [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#); [Vervain, essential oil](#)
insomnia in children [Sweet Woodruff, herb](#)
internal parasites [Plantain, herb*](#)
irritability [Passion Flower, herb](#)
irritable bowel syndrome [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Plantain, herb*](#)
jaundice [Barberry, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
kidney conditions [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
kidney stones [Barberry, herb](#)
laryngitis [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
laxative [Barberry, herb](#)

leukorrhoea [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
ligaments, strained [Plantain, essential oil](#)
liver conditions [Barberry, herb](#); [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#); [Milk Thistle, essential oil](#); [Vervain, herb](#)
liver regeneration [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#); [Milk Thistle, essential oil](#)
lung cancer [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
malaria [Barberry, herb](#)
ME [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
memory loss [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
menstruation, induce [Frankincense, essential oil](#); [Rue, herb](#)
migraine [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Vervain, herb](#)
milk flow, increase [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)
morning after pill [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
mouth infections [Frankincense, herb](#)
multiple sclerosis [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
muscle spasms [Ajowan, herb*](#)
muscles, strained [Plantain, essential oil](#)
muscle weakness [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
mushroom poisoning [Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)
nervous exhaustion [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [Vervain, essential oil](#)
nervous tension [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
neuralgia [Thorn Apple, herb](#); [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Vervain, herb](#)
neuritis [St John's Wort, herb](#)
nosebleed [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
OCD [Crab Apple, herb*](#)
opiate withdrawal [Barberry, herb](#)
ovarian cancer [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
palpitations [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
panic attacks [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
parasites, internal [Thorn Apple, herb](#); [Chamomile, herb](#); [Wormwood, herb](#)
Parkinson's disease [Thorn Apple, herb](#)
peptic ulcer [Plantain, herb*](#)
periods, heavy [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
periods, painful [Barberry, herb](#)
piles [Lungwort, herb*](#)

piles [Plantain, herb*](#)
pms [Passion Flower, herb](#); [Milk Thistle, essential oil](#)
poison antidote [Rue, herb](#)
poison ivy antidote [Solomon's Seal, herb](#)
post-partum hemorrhage [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
psoriasis [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
rabies [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
rashes [Plantain, essential oil](#)
reduce fevers [Crab Apple, herb*](#)
respiratory conditions [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
restlessness [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
rheumatism [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Lily of the Valley, herb](#); [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
ringworm [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
scalds [St John's Wort, herb](#)
scarring [Plantain, essential oil](#)
scars, remove [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
sciatica [Barberry, herb](#); [Southernwood, herb](#)
senility [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
sinusitis [Plantain, herb*](#)
skin conditions [Roman Chamomile, essential oil](#); [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)
skin, dry [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
skin infections [Ajowan, herb*](#)
skin inflammation [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [Crab Apple, herb*](#); [Hyssop, herb](#); [Plantain, herb*](#)
skin, irritated [Plantain, essential oil](#)
skin, mature [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
skin wash [Solomon's Seal, herb](#)
skin, wrinkled [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
sores, open [Chamomile, herb](#)
sores, ulcerated [Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#)
spermatorrhea [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
splinters [Plantain, essential oil](#); [Southernwood, herb](#)
stimulant [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
stomach cancer [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
strangury [Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#)

stress [Vervain, essential oil](#)
styptic [Lungwort, herb*](#)
sunburn [St John's Wort, herb](#)
sunstroke [Sacred Lotus with Licorice, herb](#)
sweating, induce [Barberry, herb](#); [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
syphilis [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
teeth, loose [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
teeth, strengthen [Frankincense, herb](#)
tendons, strained [Plantain, essential oil](#)
tension [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
thrive, failure to [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
throat, sore [Lungwort, herb*](#)
tinea [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
tonic, adrenal [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
tonic, digestive [Hyssop, herb](#); [European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)
tonic, general [Ashwagandha, herb](#); [Barberry, herb](#); [Chamomile, herb](#);
[Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
tonic, heart [Sacred Lotus, herb](#); [Vervain, essential oil](#)
tonic, thyroid [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
tonic, uterine [Frankincense, essential oil](#)
toothache [Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)
tranquillizer [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
tumors [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
ulcer, external [St Benedict's Thistle, herb](#)
ulcer, gastric [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
ulcer, internal [Chamomile, herb](#)
ulcer, leg [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
ulcer, malignant [Plantain, herb*](#)
urinary frequency [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
uterine bleeding [Sacred Lotus, herb](#)
vaginal discharge [Passion Flower, herb](#)
varicose veins [European Mistletoe, herb](#); [Sweet Woodruff, herb](#)
vasodilator [European Mistletoe, herb](#)
vitiligo [Bishop's Weed, herb](#)
wasting disease [Ashwagandha, herb](#)
wind [Ajowan, herb*](#); [Ajowan, essential oil](#); [Chamomile, herb](#)

Table of Contents

[Herbs with religious connections](#)

[Why organic growing methods are important](#)

[Safety First](#)

[Remedies in this book which can be used during pregnancy.](#)

[Ajowan](#)

[Crab Apple](#)

[Thorn Apple](#)

[Ashwagandha](#)

[Barberry](#)

[Chamomile](#)

[Passion Flower](#)

[Frankincense](#)

[Hyssop](#)

[Jacob's Ladder](#)

[Lily of the Valley](#)

[Sacred Lotus](#)

[Love Lies Bleeding](#)

[Lungwort](#)

[European Mistletoe](#)

[Plantain](#)

[Rue](#)

[European Goat's Rue](#)

[Solomon's Seal](#)

[Southernwood](#)

[Blessed Milk Thistle](#)

[St Benedict's Thistle](#)

[Vervain](#)

[Bishop's Weed](#)

[Sweet Woodruff](#)

[Wormwood](#)

[St John's Wort](#)

[Index of Remedies](#)

[ajowan](#)

[crab apple](#)

[lungwort](#)

[plantain](#)

[goat's rue](#)

[blessed milk thistle](#)

[Ammi majus](#)

[ashwagandha](#)

[thorn apple](#)

*

-

[wormwood](#)

[Sacred Lotus, herb](#)

[Thorn Apple, herb](#)

[Ashwagandha, herb](#)

[Passion Flower, herb](#)

[Jacob's Ladder, herb](#)

[Bishop's Weed, herb](#)

[St Benedict's Thistle, herb](#)

[Barberry, herb](#)

[Crab Apple, herb*](#)

[Frankincense, herb](#)

[European Mistletoe, herb](#)

[Rue, herb](#)

[Love Lies Bleeding, herb](#)

[Ajowan, herb*](#)

[Frankincense, essential oil](#)

[Hyssop, herb](#)

[St John's Wort, herb](#)

[Vervain, essential oil](#)

[Sacred Lotus, essential oil](#)

[Ajowan, essential oil](#)

[European Goat's Rue, herb†](#)

[Southernwood, herb](#)

[Plantain, herb*](#)

[Lungwort, herb*](#)

[Vervain, herb](#)

[Plantain, essential oil](#)

[Wormwood, herb](#)

[Solomon's Seal, herb](#)

[Milk Thistle, essential oil](#)

[Blessed Milk Thistle, herb*](#)

[Chamomile, herb](#)

[Lily of the Valley, herb](#)

[Roman Chamomile, essential oil](#)

[Sweet Woodruff, herb](#)

[Sacred Lotus with Licorice, herb](#)