

Herbal Monograph: Lemon Verbena

Common Name: Lemon Verbena

Latin binomial: *Aloysia triphylla*

Identification-Part Used/Definition:

Leaves and flowers

Identification-Botanical Identification:

Lance shaped leaves growing opposite along the stem. The flowers grow on sprays on terminal branches.

Growing & Harvesting: It is a perennial herb that grows in zone 8 to 10. In zones 2 to 7 grow in containers and overwinter indoors. It is grown from easily rooting cuttings. The seeds are sterile.

Harvest the leaves as needed. Prune back in July, and at flowering to encourage branching. May be trained to a classic single stem with globe shaped top.

Effects/Energetics:

Cooling

Actions:

Nervine, antispasmodic, antipyretic, sedative, carminative, aromatic, anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, protective,

Uses of the Plant:

It was planted near doorways and stable yards, as the strong citrus scent repels flies and mosquitoes. It was used traditionally as a sedative, to quell fever, and lift the spirits.

Key Constituents:

The essential oil, known as oil of verbena, contains -citral, -citral, methyl heptenone, carvone, l-limonene, dipentene, linalool, -terpineol, borneol, nerol, geraniol, and other constituents. Because of its high price, oil of verbena is often adulterated with distillates from other plant material.



Leaves and flowers: cineole, acetic-acid, alpha-citral, alpha-pinene , alpha-terpinene, borneol, geraniol,limonene, tannin, terpinen-4-ol , caryophyllene, flavons

Specific Indications:

Digestive tonic, calming, mild expectorant, sleep aid for insomnia due to general tension. Reduces fever. Relieves joint pain, anti-inflammatory

Clinical Use:

The essential oil is used in aromatherapy. It quickens the brain and sharpens concentration. The cool and refreshing fragrance of lemon verbena increases energy, relieves fatigue, and overcomes feelings of apathy, disinterest and listlessness.

The tea is used as a tonic for the nervous system. It relieves spasms of the digestive tract and aids digestion.

It is being studied for the relief of joint pain and inflammation.

Traditional Use: Lemon verbena is used primarily as a culinary herb, but it also makes a delightful medicinal herb tea that soothes stomach spasms and calm nerves and reduces fevers. The sweet, lemony scent is found in perfumes, soaps and sachets.

A French perfume from the 1850s, “Verbena” fell out of favour because of the expense of extracting the essential oil.

During the summer heat, Victorian women placed lemon verbena leaves in their handkerchiefs to inhale and refresh themselves, according to Possum Creek Herb Farm. They also used the leaves to scent the water in fingerbowls during elaborate, multi-course Victorian dinners.

Pharmacology: (scientific research)

In a study in the Asian Journal of Animal & Veterinary Advances;(Sep2011, Vol. 6 Issue 9, p953,) Malekirad, et als, found that Lemon Verbena reduced oxidative stress. “Lemon verbena is beneficial in improving body oxidant/antioxidant balance and thus its clinical efficacy remains to be tested in oxidative-stress-related diseases or conditions. Use of this herbal extract is recommended as a dietary supplement.”

Caturla N et als, found that lemon verbena and omega 3 rich fish oil supplements significantly helped patients with joint pain. “A randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study of the effect of a combination of lemon verbena extract and fish oil omega-3 fatty acid on joint management.” The combination reduced symptoms of pain and stiffness significantly, and improved physical function after 9 weeks of treatment.

Safety Issues:

None known

Preparation and Dose:

Standard infusion

Recipes:

5 leaves of lemon verbena in a cup of boiling water to make a tea.

References:

Annie's Remedies: http://www.anniesremedy.com/herb_detail348.php

Caturla N, Funes L, Pérez-Fons L, Micol V. "A randomized, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study of the effect of a combination of lemon verbena extract and fish oil omega-3 fatty acid on joint management." Journal Alternative and Complementary Medicine. 2011 Nov;17(11):1051-63. doi: 10.1089/acm.2010.0410.

Malekirad, Ali Akbar; Hosseini, Nasser; Bayrami, Mansour; Hashemi, Touraj; Rahzani, Kobra; Abdollahi, Mohammad "**Benefit of Lemon Verbena in Healthy Subjects; Targeting Diseases Associated with Oxidative Stress**"Asian Journal of Animal & Veterinary Advances;Sep2011, Vol. 6 Issue 9, p953

Purdue Guide to Medicinal and Aromatic Plants : http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/med-aro/factsheets/LEMON_VERBENA.html