

Herbs For Healing Newsletter



Nutrient rich Herb of the Month: Comfrey

When walking along a river or small stream you are likely to find some comfrey. You might even have it in your garden. It is a popular plant for gardeners who want to avoid artificial fertilisers.

Comfrey makes an excellent liquid fertiliser high in potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus.

These nutrients are stored in the leaves. Gardeners can access these nutrients by harvesting the leaves and letting them break down with or without water to gain a dark, nutrient-rich plant food. It has a very strong, sewage-like smell. This liquid needs to be diluted and applied to soil and plants.



Known as Knitbone in Folklore

Modern science confirms that comfrey can have a positive effect in mending bone fractures. It contains a substance called **allantoin**, which speeds up the natural mending and replacement of body cells.

The leaves can be harvested while they are still fresh looking, and dried as well. One of the common names for comfrey is 'knitbone', a reminder of its traditional use in healing bone fractures.

Comfrey was and is still used to treat a variety of ailments ranging from bronchial problems, broken bones, sprains, arthritis, gastric and varicose ulcers, severe burns, acne and other skin conditions. As well as allantoin comfrey also contains mucilage, steroidal saponins, tannins, pyrrolizidine alkaloids, inulin, and proteins.

"Trials undertaken by Henry Doubleday Association members, (also) showed that it is a valuable plant for pain relief. Reports submitted by Dr. S. J. L. Mount, Berkshire, U.K., who supervised the trials in 1983, tested 90 members with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Members took comfrey, as either 4 cups of tea or 9 tablets, daily. Dr. Mount reported there were no side effects from this dosage, whatsoever, and no reports of any symptoms, which could be construed as liver symptomatology. Patients reported improvement in well-being, with 23-35% pain relief and mobility".

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So how can I take Comfrey?

As a Salad: The fresh leaves and shoots can be harvested in Spring and cooked as a vegetable or eaten raw in a salad.

One of the minerals which have been extracted from comfrey is cobalt, which it uses to produce possibly the only plant source of vitamin B12, this makes comfrey a valuable dietary supplement for vegans.

Comfrey Cream: October and November are the time of year when you can uproot comfrey root for making comfrey cream.

Scrub the root, chop or grate it into small pieces and dry them before infusing them in olive oil or any other good plant oil.

Heat up the resulting comfrey oil and melt bee's wax into it to solidify it, 1 part wax to 10 parts oil.



Is Comfrey safe?

Comfrey was given a bad name in the past – all part of the herbal witch hunt *in my opinion*.

Comfrey leaves are safe to use as a herbal tea or as a tincture but the root should not be taken internally.

Comfrey root contains a special kind of alkaloid which can affect the liver when taken in excessive high doses.

It is however safe to use the root for making a cream.



Make a comfrey tea or infusion

Make an infusion with 1 teaspoon of comfrey leaf and one mug of boiling water, left for 10 minutes. Drink 1 to 2 mugs a day.

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