

Tonic Herbs

Burdock *Arctium lappa* is an Alterative, which means when taken it regulates and balances the body's systems. For example it is popular at our markets because of its high inulin content, which helps type 2 diabetics balance their blood sugar. We have a testimonial from one of our market costumers who took it every day for a month that her blood sugar dropped significantly after the burdock from the month before according to her doctor. Burdock loves rich soil and will form taproots helpful in loosening up garden soil. When harvesting always remember the Burdock will break off at the end of the root ensuring its survival. Use a garden fork to dig up the root. Best harvested in fall. Look for the 1st year roots, which have no air pockets in the middle. The second year roots are pithy as the energy in the plant is moving up to put out seeds. We chop it up into half inch pieces after harvesting and cleaning so it can dry and be available for tea. You can take the tea to three times a day for as long as a month. It is also a historically Japanese vegetable and can be added to sautés and soups.

Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* is a diuretic, which means it helps folks pass water. It's excellent to detoxify the body and can be taken to work through any illness. It is best to harvest it the second year to the bigger more potent roots. It can be prepared and used like burdock but better to be used every day for just a couple weeks at a time.

Yellow Dock *Rumex Crispus* is an excellent alterative great for a more serious cleanse. Lots of folks take the tea three times a day in the springtime. It can be taken for weeks at a time. There are two varieties broad leaf and curly dock. The broad leaf is a more mild medicine and the curly dock is for a good cleanse. It is widespread tolerating difficult growing conditions. It can be prepared similarly to burdock.

Nettles *Urtica dioica* is an awesome nutrient herb. It contains high amounts of vitamin A, C, iron (we have had lots of folks buy it for anemia) high in calcium and magnesium (the magnesium helps the body break down calcium so it can be absorbed into the bones). Something to consider is that plants contain some form of the nutrients they absorb from the soil. Always check the quality of the soil that you are harvesting from especially when using a plant for its nutrients. Besides being highly nutrient it helps folks with plant-based allergies, its good for regulating blood pressure and has of silica making it an excellent hair conditioner! It is advisable to harvest it with gloves although the stings it causes can help arthritis and stiff joints. It grows in super rich soil ours being in a 15 foot tall mound of compost. Do not harvest in soils that may be contaminated with heavy metal. Dry for 5 days on a screen in a sunny window. For

much faster drying remove all stem. The best part of the plant to harvest is the new shoots, do not harvest seeded out plants.

Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* is a mild but highly effective expectorant for lots of folks. An expectorant is removes excess mucous from the lungs. The word has become known as more generally as a tonic of the lungs. I often have folks coming to the stand to use the Mullein for asthma. A lady from the neighborhood running the stand across from me used mullein and found it opened up her chest reducing her asthma and got rid of a lot of excess flem from her lungs! It grows in well-drained gravelly or sandy soil. The leaf of the first year plant is the one to harvest for a lung tonic. To store it is essential to dry it thoroughly, which takes two weeks or more! Old NYC Apartments in the winter are great to dry tough to dry herbs such as Mullein as due to the lack of sunlight and powerful radiator heating.

Sleep and Teeth

Catnip *Nepeta cataria* is a mild sedative good for children. Harvest straight leaves or most potent harvested when flowering but before the seeds form. Its normally grey but can turn colors in the fall. Seed can be bought in a variety of seed catalogs. It is an annual that grows vigorously and can compete with weeds.

Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* is a more serious sedative, excellent for soothing the nerves. Good for headaches and insomnia. Very strong grower will integrate into the wild. Seeds available in most seed catalogs. Harvest the ends of the roots and replant after the second year. Make a tea with this highly effective herb but be for warned the taste will take getting used to. Pour a cup of boiling water onto 1-2 teaspoonfuls of the root and let it infuse for 10 to 15 minutes. This should be drunk only when needing to sleep.

Spilanthes *Acmella oleracea* flowers are excellent for toothaches. Contains the chemical compound "spilanthol" which has a numbing effect on the mouth. It is also antibacterial and anti-viral. Excellent herb to take folks through a tooth infection they can't afford to fix. The herb comes from the tropical climate of Brazil. The plant is very cold sensitive. Takes 3 weeks to start indoors. Will establish well after last frost in garden. Needs regular watering.

Bibliography

The Herbal Handbook: A User's Guide to Medical Herbalism

David Hoffman

Identifying and harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places

Steve Brill with Evelyn Dean

Fedco Seed Catalog 2010

Personal Experiences of (myself) Ben Schwartz!

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