Uva Ursi

Latin Name: *Arctostaphylos uva ursi*

Also known as: Bearberry (bearberry is also a common name for another herb, Cascara), Bear's Grape, Kinnikinnick (Indian name), Mountain Cranberry, Mealberry, Fox Berry, Rockberry, Arberry, Mountain Box, Barren Myrtle, Coralillo.

Note: Sometimes uva ursi is confused with the common plant name 'arbutus.' It is called arbutus-uva ursi in at least one early herbal references, but it differs from the true arbutus plant.

Scientific Classification

Bearberries are three species of dwarf shrubs in the genus Arctostaphylos.

Family: Ericaceae – heath family
Genus: Arctostaphylos – manzanita
Species: *A. uva ursi* – common bearberry

Influence on the Body	(PRINCIPLE ACTIONS are listed in CAPITAL LETTERS)
Blood and Circulatory System	alterative (purifies the blood, cleanses, and induces efficient removal of waste products) • anemia • strengthens heart muscle • cardiac dropsy (swelling of tissues around the heart)
Blood Sugar	DIABETES • pancreas
Body System	mucous membranes • astringent (tightens, constricts and tones tissues, reduces swelling and mucous discharge)
Digestive Tract	improves appetite • aromatic (contains volatile oils which aid digestion) • digestive disorders • dysentery (bowel inflammation) • diarrhea • hemorrhoids • emetic (causes vomiting in large doses) • purgative (in large doses causes watery evacuation of intestinal contents)
Inflammation	arthritis • rheumatism
Infections and Immune System	fevers • disinfectant • antibiotic • SPLEEN • herpes
Liver	liver • gallstones
Lungs & Respiration	lung congestion • bronchitis

Reproductive System	GONORRHEA • venereal diseases • syphilis *Male:* • prostate gland weakness *Female:* • female problems • excessive menstruation • UTERINE ULCERATION • prolapsed uterus • vagina • vaginal discharge • leucorrhea (vaginal discharge due to infection) • parturient (in large doses stimulates uterine contractions which induce and assist labor)
Skin, Tissues & Hair	shingles
Urinary Tract	lower back pain • RENAL ULCERATIONS • renal sedative (exerts calming, soothing or tranquilizing effect on the kidneys) • urinary antiseptic • KIDNEY INFECTIONS • NEPHRITIS (kidney inflamation) • BRIGHT'S DISEASE (chronic kidney inflammation) • kidney stones • gravel • urolithiasis (process of forming stones in the urinary tract) • anti-lithic (prevents or relieves calculi stones) • lithotriptic (dissolves and discharges urinary and gall bladder stones) • uric acid • urinary disorders • water retention • DIURETIC (increases urine flow) • BLADDER INFECTIONS • CYSTITIS (bladder inflammation) • BLADDER CATARRH (congestion and inflammation of the mucous membranes in the bladder) • dysuria (impaired ability to pass urine, painful voiding) • bladder incontinence (involuntary voiding) • bedwetting • strangury (difficult, painful urination, with passage of only a small amount at a time) • CHRONIC URETHRITIS (inflammation of urethra) • pyelitis (infection of the pelvic outlet of the kidney)
Weight	obesity • weight loss

Key Properties:

• *<u>HEALS AND SUPPORTS URINARY TRACT HEALTH</u> – the body uses the herb's healing qualities to strengthen, repair, cleanse, and tone the entire urinary tract system*

• *<u>ASTRINGENT</u> – increases the tone and firmness of tissues, reduces discharges of the urinary tract, lungs, intestines, and draining sores*

• *<u>alterative DIURETIC</u> – increases urine flow, purifies and cleanses the urinary system*

• *<u>antiseptic</u> and <u>anti-inflammatory</u> – kills bacteria, soothes and reduces congestion of mucous membranes*

Primarily affecting: *KIDNEYS • GENITO-URINARY SYSTEMS*

History	Uva Ursi, from the Latin ‘uva,’ meaning grape (berry of the vine) and ‘ursi’, meaning bear, is also known as Bear's Grape and Bearberry. The fruit of the plant is edible and said to be enjoyed by bears, a few species of songbirds, and other game animals. Venetian merchant and explorer Marco Polo (1254–1324) reported that Chinese physicians were using this herb as a diuretic and to treat kidney and urinary problems. Kublai Khan (1215-1294), who welcomed Marco Polo to China, had learned of uva ursi during his invasion of China. According to *Physicians of Myddfai*, a 13th century Welsh herbal text, uva ursi was used as a powerful astringent. Early colonists found that Native Americans mixed the leaves of uva ursi with tobacco to create a smoking combination they called ‘kinnikinnick’, meaning mixture. They used kinnikinnick in religious ceremonies (as a smoldering smudge or smoked in a sacred pipe) to carry the smoker's prayers to the Great Spirit. American Indians used uva ursi in a wide variety of healing applications. In addition to smoking the leaves for sacred purposes, the smoke from the leaves was used for earaches, and the leaves were chewed to suppress thirst. A leaf tea was made and used for sore gums, for canker sores and as a mouth wash. The tea was also used as a diuretic tonic, antiseptic and astringent to heal urinary tract ailments such as urethritis, kidney stones and cystitis. The Cheyenne used the tea to treat back sprains and chronic back pain. Other tribes drank it to treat venereal disease. The entire plant was utilized to make an infusion to wash hair in cases of dandruff and scalp disorders, and to clean and heal skin sores. Leaves and stems were ground up, made into a poultice paste, and applied to sores, cuts, burns, boils, and pimples, to accelerate healing. Moistened leaves were rubbed on the back for pain relief. Berries were eaten raw or cooked, and considered quite nutritious. They were eaten in large quantities as a laxative. The leaves and fruit mixed with fat was given to children for

	diarrhea, and used as a salve for rashes, boils, burns, and skin sores. Until the development of sulfa drugs in the 1940s, uva ursi's principal active component, arbutin, was frequently prescribed for urinary infections. In Germany, bearberry is approved as a urinary antiseptic.
Attributes	*Key Components: (including, but not limited to)* • Allantoin (accelerates healing) • Arbutin (glycoside found in the leaves) • Tannins (found in leaves and berries, has astringent qualities) Uva Ursi's diuretic action comes from arbutin, which is largely absorbed into the system (unchanged by digestion) and excreted by the kidneys. It has an antiseptic effect on the urinary mucous membranes. The leaves have a high tannic acid composition (six to eight percent).
Urinary Tract	Uva Ursi has a specific healing action upon the genito-urinary organs, especially in cases of gravel or ulceration of kidney or bladder membranes. The herb helps balance the pH of highly acidic urine, and it acts as a solvent to uretic calculi deposits. It is effective in kidney disorders, including mucous buildup with pus and blood. Uva Ursi soothes inflammation and decreases excessive mucous discharge. It has no equal for addressing chronic inflammation of the bladder and kidneys, as it strengthens and tones the mucous membranes of the urinary passages. Uva Ursi has antiseptic and antibiotic properties for infections and diseases that occur in the kidneys and bladder. The herb has effectively healed urinary infections that were unresponsive to pharmaceutical antibiotics. Uva Ursi has been shown to work in various types of bladder and kidney diseases, including pyelitis, nephritis, cystitis, urethritis, and others. As a diuretic, uva ursi increases the flow of urine, helping the body to discharge residual stone material, mucus, and infections. It is important to not force cleansing through over-dosage. This may dislodge mucus and wastes so quickly that they block or damage organ structures. It is best to gradually cleanse overtaxed, eliminative organs. Uva Ursi is a powerful astringent herb that stimulates kidney

	activity. It has sedative and tonic qualities which affect weakened kidneys, bladder walls, and the sphincter muscle of the bladder (helping prevent leaking). It is used to alleviate bedwetting and in the treatment of the involuntary loss of bladder control. Uva Ursi is a kidney healing herb. It works well in combination with other mucilaginous, diuretic herbs in urinary tract formulas.
Blood Sugar	Uva Ursi helps the body cleanse and purify the blood. It washes out excessive sugar in the blood and assists the body in controlling diabetes.
Inflammation	The leaves of uva ursi contain more than a dozen anti-inflammatory and antiseptic compounds that help rid the body of arthritis and inflammation throughout the body.
Infections	Research confirms uva ursi is a strong antimicrobial agent against many organisms including Staphylococcus and E. Coli. Two studies evaluated the antibacterial potency of the urine of people who were taking uva ursi and found activity against most major bacteria that infect the urinary tract.
Tonic	Uva Ursi has invigorating and body strengthening properties. It cleanses and reinforces the spleen and is a tonic for a weakened liver and other glands. It is considered to be a digestive stimulant.
Reproductive System	Due to the proximity of the prostate to the urinary tract in males, uva ursi has also been found to be effective in prostate remedies. It is reported to aid in treating certain sexually transmitted diseases.
Women	Uva Ursi is used for womb problems and is very good as a post-partum remedy to help prevent infections. An uva ursi bath helps soothe the discomfort of inflammation, skin infections, hemorrhoids, and after-childbirth trauma. It is also used as a douche for vaginal infections and other problems of the pelvic region. Ingesting uva ursi in large doses stimulates the uterus to contract, helping to assist labor and hasten childbirth.
Herb Parts Used	Leaves
Preparations and Remedies	Leaves are dried and cut or powdered to be made into teas, tinctures and other herbal preparations.

Powdered Formula

Kidney Formula: (see JUNIPER preparations)

Infusions

Uva Ursi Tea:
1 tablespoon Uva Ursi leaves, cut
1 cup Water

Boil the water and immediately pour over the leaves. Cover and steep for ten minutes. Strain, cool, bottle and keep in a cool place. Drink two ounces, three to four times a day before meals.

Take the tea internally for urinary infections and disorders. Use the tea as a wash for hemorrhoids, or as a douche for uterine ulceration or infection.

Tea for Urinary Tract Infections:
1 part Plantain
1 part Slippery Elm
1/2 part Ginger
2 parts Goldenseal
1 part Uva Ursi
1 part Juniper Berry

Mix herbs together. Make a tea using 1 tablespoon herb mix per cup of boiling water, steep for 10 minutes, and strain. Drink a half cup of tea every 1-2 hours.

Kidney/ Lower Back Tea:
4 parts Uva Ursi
4 parts Juniper Berry
1 part Dandelion root
1 part Marshmallow
1 part Parsley
1 part Ginger
1 part Plantain

Simmer 2 tablespoons herb mixture for 10 minutes in pure water with lid on tight. Remove from heat, cover and steep for 20 minutes. Strain and drink 1-2 cups as needed for lower back discomfort. The herb nutrients used to support the kidneys, travel to the lower back and strengthen and assist healing the entire area.

Herbal Bath

Uva Ursi put in a stocking and added to a hot tub of water makes a healing bath.

	Alternative: Boil 2 ounces uva ursi for 5 minutes in a gallon of water. Let cool and add to bath water. Soak for 30 minutes morning and night. The herbs help relieve symptoms of herpes and shingles.
Safety	No health hazards or adverse side effects are known. The herb has a large amount of tannins, which could cause stomach upset when taken in large quantities. Begin with smaller amounts of uva ursi, and increase gradually. You may notice that the herb often turns urine a dark green. Do not be alarmed, this is normal. Some recommend that uva ursi not be given to children under the age of two. In large quantities, the herb stimulates the uterus to contract and acts as a vasoconstrictor (cuts down circulation) to the uterus. Pregnant women should not take large amounts of Uva Ursi.
Plant Profile	*Natural Habitat:* Uva Ursi grows abundantly in cool, temperate regions of the northern hemisphere including North America, Europe and Asia. The low growing evergreen shrub is found in pine woods and sterile, sandy and gravelly soils.
Description	This extremely winter hardy, slow-growing shrub will typically grow to 6-12 inches high and 3-6 feet wide. Over time, and in the proper environment, bearberry can spread (by stem rooting) to cover a larger area, up to 15 feet in diameter and up to 20 inches in height. Uva Ursi features reddish-gray branches with numerous lustrous, dark green leaves which turn reddish-brown in the winter. As the plant spreads, it forms a dark green carpet ground cover. The small leathery leaves are a shining deep green on the upper surface and paler beneath. The leaves have no distinctive odor, but they have a very astringent and somewhat bitter taste. At the ends of the branches, 3-15 small, waxy-looking, white (or pink), bell-shaped flowers droop in closely-crowded clusters. These flowers appear June through September (showing as early as April in some areas). Bright red berries do not ripen until winter. They are extremely sour but are readily eaten by birds. The quarter to half inch fruit is smooth and glossy, with a tough skin enclosing a mealy pulp and up to seven kidney-shaped

	seeds.
Growing Uva Ursi	As well as being a valuable herb, uva ursi is an excellent, although slow-growing, ground cover. The plant can provide erosion protection for slopes and hillsides and has been adopted by landscapers for use as a drought tolerant, glossy leaved evergreen.
Planting	Bearberry grows best in cool surroundings and acid, rocky, well-drained soils. It should not be fertilized. The plant prefers full sun or light shade and does well in pots. Propagation by seed is difficult. It is generally sown in the fall, spring, or summer by cuttings or layerings.
Harvesting	Most of the leaves in commerce are wild harvested by hand. They should be collected on fine September or October mornings, after the dew has dried. Select only green leaves and reject any leaves that are stained or broken.
Drying	Drying may be done out-of-doors in warm, sunny weather, in half-shade. Leaves dried in the shade retain their color better than those dried in direct sun. Spread leaves in a single layer (preferably not touching) on frames covered with wire or garden netting, ensuring air circulation, and turn as needed. If there is any risk of dampness from dew or showers, take indoors to a dry room, or shed. Leaves may also be dried by exposure to gentle heat.
Storage	Once the leaves are dried, they should be packed quickly away in closed containers (leaves re-absorb moisture from the air). Store in a cool, dry, dark location.