

# Burdock

Latin Name: *Arctium lappa*

*Also known as:* Turkey Burrseed, Hurr-bur, Hareburr, Hardock, Great Burr, Thorny Burr, Cockle Buttons, Beggars Buttons, Fox's Cloth, Lappa, Philanthropium, Sticky Bob, Gobo (in Japan)

## Scientific Classification

- Family:* Asteraceae – aster, daisy and sunflower family  
 Compositae – in earlier classifications  
*Genus:* Arctium – burdock  
*Species:* *A. lappa* – greater burdock  
*Species:* *A. minus* – lesser burdock

Influence on the Body	(PRINCIPLE ACTIONS are listed in CAPITAL LETTERS)
<i>Autoimmune Disorders</i>	lupus • RHEUMATISM
<i>Blood and Circulatory System</i>	BLOOD CLEANSER • BLOOD PURIFIER • blood poisoning • scurvy • DEPURATIVE (cleanses blood by promoting eliminative functions)
<i>Blood Sugar</i>	HYPERGLYCEMIA • HYPOGLYCEMIA
<i>Body System</i>	demulcent (softens and soothes inflammation of mucous membranes) • degenerative conditions • endurance • energy • fatigue • TONIC (increases energy and strengthens the muscular and nervous system, while improving digestion and assimilation, resulting in a general sense of well-being) • INTERNAL ABSCESSSES
<i>Cancer</i>	CANCER • TUMORS of glands and spleen
<i>Digestive Tract</i>	bitter (stimulates digestive juices and improves appetite) • stomach disorders • ulcers • carminative (relieves intestinal gas discomfort, and promotes peristalsis) • CONSTIPATION • LAXATIVE • HEMORRHOIDS
<i>Eyes</i>	styes
<i>First Aid</i>	wounds • burns
<i>Infections and Immune System</i>	ALLERGIES • hayfever • LYMPHATIC CONGESTION • LYMPHATIC SYSTEM • lymph glands • CHRONIC INFECTIONS • COLDS • bacteriocide (kills bacteria) • coughs • FEVERS • MEASLES • CHICKEN POX (treat

	both internally and externally) • LEPROSY
<i>Inflammation</i>	inflammation • RHEUMATISM • ARTHRITIS • BURSITIS • GOUT
<i>Liver</i>	LIVER PROBLEMS • gall bladder • gallstones • cholagogue (promotes the flow of bile)
<i>Lungs and Respiratory System</i>	bronchitis • lungs • pneumonia • tuberculosis
<i>Mouth and Throat</i>	CANKER SORES • TONSILLITIS • sore throats
<i>Nervous System</i>	nervous conditions • SCIATICA NERVE
<i>Poisons</i>	poisons • antidote (neutralizes poison)
<i>Reproductive System</i>	SYPHILIS • venereal diseases • gonorrhea <i>Female:</i> • prolapsed uterus
<i>Skin, Tissues &amp; Hair</i>	BRUISES • SORES • ACNE (blood cleansing) • PIMPLES • BOILS • carbuncles (boil) • SKIN DISORDERS • skin eruptions • IMPETIGO (highly contagious skin disease) • ECZEMA • PSORIASIS • rosacea (symptomatic red nose) • RASHES • HERPES • ITCHING • POISON IVY • POISON OAK • BURNS/ SCALDS • FLUID RETENTION • SWELLING • dandruff • hair growth • hair loss • baldness
<i>Urinary Tract</i>	BLADDER INFECTIONS • BLADDER PAIN • KIDNEY PROBLEMS • cystitis • diuretic (increases urine flow) • lithotriptic (dissolves urinary stones)
<i>Weight</i>	obesity

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**Key Properties:**

- ALTERATIVE - (root and seeds) – purifies the BLOOD; specific for the LIVER and SKIN
- DIAPHORETIC - (root) – increases perspiration
- DIURETIC - (root and seeds)
- demulcent - (root) – softens and soothes; specific for the DIGESTIVE TRACT and SKIN
- TONIC - (leaves) • nutritive

**Primarily affecting: BLOOD • KIDNEYS • STOMACH • LIVER • SKIN**

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## History

Burdock has the historical reputation of being an 'alterative,' meaning herbalists have considered it as a good source of nutrients to help build up and cleanse the body. In the early 1900s, plants like dandelion and burdock were called 'blood purifiers.'

Menominee and Micmac Indians used burdock for skin sores while the Cherokees used it for a broader base of ailments.

In ancient China and India, herbalists used burdock in the treatment of respiratory infections, abscesses, and joint pain. Chinese physicians also used it for measles and skin sores as well.

During the Middle Ages, Europeans began using burdock to treat cancerous tumors, skin conditions, venereal disease, and bladder and kidney problems.

Interestingly, in the early 1940s, the hooked burr of the burdock thistle inspired Swiss inventor George de Mestral to create the popular fastener 'Velcro'.

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## Attributes

Key Components: (including, but not limited to)

Vitamins A • B1 (thiamine) • B3 (niacin) • B5 (pantothenic acid) • B6 (pyridoxine) • B9 (folic acid) • B12 (cobalamin) • Biotin • Choline • Inositol • PABA (Para-Amino Benzoic Acid) • C • Bioflavonoids • E

Calcium • Copper • Iron (a good source) • Potassium • Sulfur • Zinc • other Trace Minerals

Burdock is an excellent choice for treating iron deficiencies.

Inulin (27-45 percent) • Amino Acids • Bitter • Volatile oils

Inulin is a low calorie starch important in the metabolism of carbohydrates. It promotes the growth of healthy intestinal bacteria and increases calcium (and possibly magnesium) absorption. (1)(2)(3)

Nutritionally, inulin is considered a form of soluble fiber (called gobo dietary fiber, or GDF, in Japanese cuisine) and is sometimes categorized as a prebiotic (helps good bacteria grow and flourish). Unlike other sugars and starches, inulin has a minimal impact on blood sugar levels, has a rather low glycemic index (measure of the effect food has on blood sugar levels), and does not raise triglyceride levels.

Because of its inulin component, burdock is generally considered to be suitable for diabetics and potentially helpful

in managing blood sugar related diseases.

<i>General</i>	Burdock has been used for centuries as a blood purifier for clearing the bloodstream of toxins and moving them out of the body, a diuretic for helping rid the body of excess water by increasing urine output, and a topical remedy for skin problems such as acne, eczema, rosacea, and psoriasis.
<i>Blood</i>	Burdock is an excellent restorative cleanser and detoxifier. It rapidly eliminates long-term impurities from the blood without causing nausea or irritation. Continued cleansing will then detoxify the cells, tissues and organs.
<i>Poisoning</i>	Burdock has the ability to neutralize most poisons, relieving both the kidney and lymphatic systems.
<i>Soothing Skin and Mucous Membranes</i>	Burdock root is a first-class blood and lymph purifier, cleansing the lymphatic vessels, serous membranes, and mucous membranes. Burdock works well for clearing up skin problems, acne, etc. It is especially indicated in chronic cutaneous lesions like eczema and psoriasis.
<i>Immune System</i>	Burdock relieves congestion of the lymphatic system and promotes perspiration. This is especially helpful in cases of fever.
<i>Liver</i>	The root helps ease liver congestion and fat digestion. It is a strong liver-purifying, and hormone-balancing herb with particular value for skin, arthritic and glandular problems.
<i>Inflammation</i>	Use the root or the seeds for rheumatism and mild to advanced cases of arthritis. Burdock is excellent for gout. It helps to reduce swelling and breaks down the calcification deposits of joints and knuckles. Burdock also soothes, cleanses, and relieves inflammation and congestion of bronchial tissue.
<i>Urinary Tract</i>	Burdock naturally increase the flow of urine which can relieve pain in the bladder and help to fight kidney and bladder infections. This reduces any water retention in tissues and joints. It is also useful for weight loss.
<i>Endocrine System</i>	Burdock works on the pituitary gland by helping it to release protein in proper amounts, thus maintaining a healthy hormonal balance.
<i>Women and Baby</i>	Burdock is an herb women can use during pregnancy. It helps balance all systems, reduces water retention, and helps prevent jaundice in the baby.

In Europe, it has been used as a remedy in cases where there was a prolapsed and displaced uterus.

*Skin*

Burdock tea makes a good wash for acne, burns and sores. Hot fomentations (towel soaked in infusion or decoction and placed on affected area) help heal swellings. Used as a poultice, burdock has been found to be an effective remedy when applied to sores and bug bites.

Burdock is one of the best herbs for taking care of chronic skin problems. Used internally and externally for skin problems, burdock and red clover (or yellow dock and sarsaparilla) are traditionally taken as a tea to treat eczema.

The seeds help restore smoothness to the skin. They have limited tonic qualities and work as a relaxant and demulcent on mucous membranes.

*Burns*

The leaves are used externally for burns, skin problems and wounds. Burn care workers report that burdock eases dressing changes, appears to impede bacterial growth on the wound site, and provides a great moisture barrier. (4)

*Cancer*

Burdock has been used by some for cancer, as it is such an excellent alterative (cleans toxins and purifies blood). It has manifested great effectiveness when used as a poultice on skin cancers and is one of the four ingredients in the reportedly successful Essiac Tea formula.

Essiac strengthens the immune system, allowing the body to take care of itself and heal. It is also an excellent cancer preventative.

*Renée Caisse*

In 1922, Renée Caisse, a Canadian nurse, received an herbal recipe from an elderly female patient in an Ontario hospital where Renée was the head nurse. The recipe Renée received had been given to the older woman years before by an Ojibwa Medicine Man.

Renée began using the formula on critically ill volunteers, calling the recipe 'Essiac' (Caisse spelled backwards is Essiac). The majority of those whom she treated came on referral with letters from their physicians certifying they had incurable or terminal forms of cancer and they had been given up by the medical profession as untreatable.

In cases where there was severe damage to life support

organs, her patients died - but they lived longer than the medical profession had predicted and, more significantly, they lived in large part, free of pain. Still others listed as hopeless and terminal, but without severe damage to vital organs, were healed and lived 35-45 more years.

Some of the positive results noted were: Cessation of pain, increased appetite (emaciated patients gained weight), improved sleep, feeling of well-being, energy, a noted decrease in depression, anxiety and fear, and a prolongation of life and a decrease of nodular masses.

Renée paid a price for her success. She was censored by her government and her clinical data and records destroyed at her death. Her story survived through friends and patients she served. (5)

I have had a lot of experience with Renee's formula. The first time I read about it was in an article that was given to my mother by Mr. Marshal. The article was an interview with Dr. Gary Glum. He had written a book about Renée Caisse entitled "*Calling of an Angel.*" Dr. Glum's article gave me hope. The drinking of Essiac was a turning point in my health and healing. I also watched hundreds of others take Essiac while I worked as an Herbalist at alternative treatment clinics. I never saw anyone respond as positively and as dramatically with any other of the many variations of this formula, than I did with the original four-herb formula that was disclosed in a court battle in the 1980s.

If you use Essiac, please make it exactly as directed. It is well worth the effort. I am so grateful to Mr. Marshall, Dr. Gary Glum and Renée Casse for their sacrifice and dedication to helping others heal. See Renée Caisse's Essiac formula below.

*Hair Growth*

In Russia, burdock oil, is used as a hair tonic to strengthen and encourage the growth of new hair. This can be done if the hair follicles are just dormant and not completely destroyed. It usually takes from six to eight months for a noticeable change.

*Herb Substitution*

Burdock is an effective replacement for chaparral.

**Herb Parts Used**

Roots, seeds and sometimes the leaves are used

**Preparations and Remedies**

*Fresh:*  
Young roots are best for eating. They are long, thin, very

crisp, and have a sweet, mild, pungent flavor. Slice one or two crisp, juicy, fresh roots and add to a soup or stew. Any harshness in the taste can be reduced by soaking julienned/shredded roots in water for five to ten minutes. Burdock root (fresh when possible) is the best for healing arthritis and any joint problems (a twisted ankle, pulled shoulder, etc.) Skin the root, cut into pieces, and blend with water. Strain and drink the liquid, a quart or more per day.

The raw root is excellent when grated and marinated. Served hot, it will fortify the system against disease, strengthen all body systems and accelerate recovery. The stalk is nutritive when cut before the flower opens, and stripped of the bitter rind, it can be boiled or used raw in salads. Its delicate flavor is similar to asparagus.

*Powdered or Cut*

The herb may be used in capsules, extracts, infusions, and in topical preparations. The seeds made into an extract are good for skin and kidney diseases.

*Tea or Wash*

Use as a wash to rinse the affected area, or make a fomentation by soaking a towel in the infusion or decoction and placing it as needed. Apply on large sores, skin diseases, inflammation, swelling, rashes, boils, and hemorrhoids. Drink as a tea for an added benefit.

Bruised leaves or tea have been used successfully for poison ivy or poison oak, and for fevers (applied to the forehead or to the soles of the feet). The tea also makes a wash for acne, burns and sores.

*Poultices*

Apply a poultice of the root over painful joints. Steamed roots can be mashed and applied to the affected area as hot as can be tolerated. Fresh leaves may be lightly steamed and applied hot. Burdock poultices can draw out splinters, poisons and pus. They improve blood flow to injured or infected areas, help fight infection, reduce tumors and gouty swellings, relieve bruises and inflammation, and speed the healing process.

For burns, shred the bruised leaves fine and fold into a stiffly beaten egg white; it will take out the heat, relieve the pain and hasten healing.

The seeds may be ground up or bruised, soaked overnight in the liquid of choice to macerate (soften), then briefly blended the following day before applying topically. Burdock seeds are wonderful for soothing, healing and softening the skin.

*Ointment*

*Itch Ointment:*

1 pound Burdock root, freshly grated  
(4 oz of dried herb may be used if fresh is not available)  
8 oz Extra Virgin Olive Oil  
1 oz Beeswax

Simmer ingredients slowly for two hours. Strain through coarse cloth or fine wire sieve, stir until solidified, and place into jars. Apply to affected parts morning and night. Also drink the root decoction internally for an increased benefit.

*Infusions*

Burdock tea of the leaves can be used as a stomach tonic and for indigestion.

*Burdock Root Decoction (strong tea):*

4 oz Burdock root, cut or powdered  
3 pints Distilled Water  
8 oz Glycerine (for longer preservation)

Simmer the herb root in distilled water for 30 minutes. Strain, sweeten with honey, allow to cool, bottle and keep in a cool place. Take 2-4 ounces, 3-4 times a day internally for fevers and skin problems such as boils, styes, carbuncles and canker sores.

*For Longer Preservation:*

Prepare as described (without honey), then return the liquid to pan, heat and reduce by simmering to one pint. Strain, allow to cool, add glycerine and shake well. Keep in a cool place and sweeten at time of use.

*Stronger Decoction:*

4 oz Burdock root, cut  
2 quarts Distilled Water  
1/4 pint Glycerine

Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and soak the herb for 8 hours, or overnight. Bring to a boil and reduce by simmering to 1 quart. Strain, return the liquid to a clean pan and reduce by simmering to 3/4 pint. Add glycerine, mix well, allow to cool. Bottle and store in a cool place.

Take 1-3 teaspoons in water (3 times as strong as the infusion) each dose. Large amounts may purge the bowels, so regulate the dosage accordingly.

*System Cleanse Tea:* (see CHAPARRAL PREPARATIONS)

*Essiac Tea by Renée Caisse*

6-1/2 cups Burdock (*A. lappa*) root, cut form

16 oz. Sheep Sorrel leaf, powdered

1 oz. Rhubarb root (Turkey), powdered

4 oz. Slippery Elm bark, powdered

***When using for debilitating illness, it is crucial to follow directions exactly!***

Rinse clean large pot and lid with hydrogen peroxide to sterilize. Pour 2 gallons of distilled water into sterilized pot. Bring water to a rolling boil with lid on (approximately 30 minutes). Stir in 1 cup Essiac Tea herbs. Replace lid and continue to boil for 10 more minutes. Turn off stove. Scrape down sides of pot and stir with sterilized spatula or spoon. Replace lid and let pot remain closed for 12 hours.

Turn stove to full heat for 20 minutes. While Essiac Tea is heating, rinse bottles, lids, funnel, strainer and other pot or bowl with hydrogen peroxide. Turn off stove after the 20 minutes and strain liquid into another pot. Use funnel to pour hot liquid into amber bottles immediately, taking care to tighten caps. Allow bottles to cool and tighten caps again. Refrigerate in light-proof bottles.

Suggested use: 2 ounces liquid 2-3 times a day on an empty stomach (2 hours after you have eaten or 15 minutes before you eat). Essiac may be warmed on the stove or taken cold. For babies, use 1 ounce of the liquid 2 times a day.

**Safety**

No health hazards or adverse side effects are known with proper dosages. Plant burrs may cause contact irritation.

Burdock is beneficial during pregnancy. The intensely bitter seed extract is a concentrated preparation and should not be used during the first two trimesters of pregnancy.

Used alone, the herb will sometimes cause expulsion of toxins through the skin and may result in the formation of temporary pustules. When combined with a diuretic (such as dandelion or juniper berry), toxins move out more effectively through the urine, rather than the skin.

**Plant Profile**

*Natural Habitat:*

*A. lappa* comes from southern Europe but is cultivated in northern Asia and North America, primarily in the north part

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	<p>of the United States. <i>A. minus</i> is the American source of the root and is found in most areas of the continental United States.</p>
<p><i>Description</i></p>	<p>Burdock prefers cool climates, and grows as a weed along roadsides and rich waste places. Burdock is any one of a group of biennial thistles in the genus <i>Arctium</i>. The plants grow three to nine feet tall and have large (up to 18 inches), dark green leaves. Its leaves are coarse and ovate, with the lower ones being heart-shaped; the underside of the leaves are woolly to hairy. The leafstalks are generally hollow. Crimson to purple flowers bloom in July and August, after which they dry out and the base becomes the troublesome half-inch burr that easily catches onto clothes and animal fur.</p>
<p><i>Growing Burdock</i></p>	<p><i>Planting:</i> Burdock seeds are direct-sown in the spring to midsummer. The plant prefers full sunlight and freshly worked soil rich in humus.</p> <p><i>Alternate planting method:</i> For easy harvesting of the root, burdock may be grown in a bale of hay. Take an old bale of wet hay and connect four 1x4 boards like an empty-bottomed flat to fit on top of the hay bale. Fill the bottomless flat with garden soil and plant burdock seeds. Seeds will germinate and send their roots down into the hay. When harvesting, remove the boards and pull apart the hay to reveal perfectly formed and tender burdock roots.</p>
<p><i>Harvesting</i></p>	<p>The root is dug up during or after the first growing season and used fresh or dried (older roots are too fibrous). Seeds are harvested at maturity in the fall of the second growing season and dried. Immature flower stalks may be harvested for eating in late spring, before flowers appear. After the stem matures, the taste becomes quite bitter. The root and seeds have a mucilaginous (slimy), somewhat sweet and slightly bitter taste. The leaves and adult stems are bitter.</p>

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