

Goldenseal

Latin Name: *Hydrastis canadensis*

Also known as: Yellow Root, Yellow Puccoon, Orange Root, Ground Raspberry, Wild Curcuma, Turmeric Root, Indian Dye, Eye Root, Eye Balm, Indian Paint, Jaundice Root, Warnera, Indian Plant, Golden Thread, Seal-all, Brown Raspberry, Hydrastis

Note: Herbalists use the spelling Goldenseal and Golden Seal interchangeably

Scientific Classification

Family: Ranunculaceae – buttercup family
Genus: Hydrastis – hydrastis
Species: *H. canadensis* – goldenseal

Influence on the Body	(PRINCIPLE ACTIONS are listed in CAPITAL LETTERS)
<i>Addictions</i>	chronic alcoholism
<i>Blood and Circulatory System</i>	CIRCULATION • heart trouble • BLEEDING • INTERNAL HEMORRHAGE
<i>Blood Sugar</i>	INSULIN • DIABETES
<i>Body System</i>	MUCOUS MEMBRANES • ANTI-CATARRHAL (eliminates mucous conditions) • general cleanser • depurative (cleanses body by promoting eliminative functions) • astringent (increases tone and firmness of the tissues and diminishes mucous discharge from the nose, intestines, vagina, and draining sores) • swelling
<i>Digestive Tract</i>	bitter (stimulates digestive juices and improves appetite) • aperitive (improves the appetite) • dyspepsia (indigestion) • digestive disorders • antacid • nausea • stomach problems • gastritis (inflammation of the lining of the stomach) • enteritis (inflammation of the intestinal tract) • bowel problems • INTESTINES • constipation • COLITIS • COLON INFLAMMATION • DIARRHEA • laxative • vermifuge (expels or repels intestinal worms) • HEMORRHOIDS
<i>Ears</i>	earaches
<i>Endocrine System</i>	swollen glands • PANCREAS • low thyroid
<i>Eyes</i>	EYE INFECTIONS • EYE WASH • conjunctivitis

<i>Infections and Immune System</i>	allergies • hay fever • ANTIBIOTIC • ANTISEPTIC • FUNGAL INFECTIONS • ringworm (fungal disease) • INFECTIONS • COLDS • COUGHS • fever • stomach flu • CONTAGIOUS DISEASES • MEASLES • CHOLERA • TYPHOID FEVER • chicken pox • diphtheria • scarlet fever • small pox • malaria • anti-periodic (prevents regular recurrence of symptoms or disease) • immuno-stimulant • lymph glands • spleen
<i>Inflammation</i>	INFLAMMATION
<i>Liver</i>	LIVER PROBLEMS • liver • hepatitis • gallbladder • cholagogue (promotes the flow of bile)
<i>Lungs and Respiratory System</i>	respiratory • asthma • BRONCHITIS
<i>Mouth, Nose & Throat</i>	GUM DISEASES • PYORRHEA (gum disease) • MOUTH SORES • CANKERS • TOOTH EXTRACTION infection • breath freshener • hoarseness • NASAL PASSAGES • NOSEBLEEDS • SINUS CONGESTION • SINUSITIS • SORE THROAT • tonsillitis
<i>Muscles</i>	antispasmodic (relaxes muscular spasms and cramps)
<i>Nervous System</i>	nervous disorders • nerves • spinal nerves • spinal meningitis
<i>Reproductive System</i>	genital herpes • venereal disease • GONORRHEA • syphilis <i>Male:</i> • PROSTATE GLAND <i>Female:</i> • regulates excessive MENSTRUATION • EMMENAGOGUE (promotes menstrual flow) • VAGINITIS • DOUCHE • uterus • morning sickness
<i>Skin, Tissues and Hair</i>	acne • boils • carbuncle • SKIN DISORDERS • skin ulceration • erysipelas (streptococcal infection of the skin) • seborrhea (skin disease) • eczema • psoriasis • rash • lupus erythematosus (skin disease typically having facial 'butterfly' rash) • itching • SKIN CANCER • poison ivy • poison oak • WOUNDS • burns
<i>Urinary Tract</i>	KIDNEYS • kidney disease • KIDNEY INFECTION • water retention • diuretic (increases urine flow) • urethritis • BLADDER INFECTIONS • BLADDER PROBLEMS
<i>Weight</i>	obesity • weight loss

Key Properties:

- MUCOUS MEMBRANE ALTERATIVE – cleanses mucous membranes and stimulates efficient removal of wastes
- ANTIBIOTIC, ANTISEPTIC and antifungal
- DIGESTIVE AID – improves appetite, induces the flow of digestive juices and bile, reduces nausea and the urge to vomit, cleanses and eliminates the congestion of mucous waste, intestinal parasites and worms
- TONIC – increases energy, strengthens the muscular and nervous system, and improves digestion and assimilation, resulting in a general sense of well-being

Primarily affecting: MUCOUS MEMBRANES • LIVER • EYES • IMMUNE SYSTEM
• STOMACH • INTESTINES

History

The American Thomsonian herbalists gave goldenseal its present common name, referring to the color of the root and its seal-like scars. Its Latin name, 'Hydrastis' comes from two Greek words, one signifying water and the other 'to accomplish', possibly given for goldenseal's effect on the mucous membranes.

Goldenseal grows primarily in the eastern parts of North America. It is found most plentifully in the woods of Ohio, where the Cherokee Indians introduced goldenseal as a cure for cancer and as a treatment for ulcers and arrow wounds. The Iriquois used goldenseal for liver disorders, fever, sour stomach, and diarrhea.

Native Americans also used goldenseal as a yellow dye. The juice was used to stain skin and clothing. It was also mixed with indigo to produce green-colored dyes.

Pioneers followed the Indian's example in using goldenseal to treat watering eyes, wounds, and rashes. They also chewed it to relieve mouth sores.

Goldenseal was on the endangered species list in the year 2000, largely due to over-harvesting practices, insufficient cultivation, and the commercial farming of other food crops encroaching on natural habitats. Wild-harvest collection became increasingly difficult and high-priced. Start-up goldenseal cultivation projects were initiated in the 1990s to increase availability. This was a very successful project. Now, cultivated goldenseal is readily available and the price has started to come down a little.

My Mom used to mix goldenseal root in a little water and

make us drink it. If we complained about it, she would mix in a spoon of honey to make it taste better. It didn't! To this day the smell of goldenseal root makes my cheeks tighten up and my saliva glands run.

I have found very few herbs that match the infection fighting power of goldenseal root. When it was put on the endangered list, many people, including myself, looked for alternatives (without much success, I might add). I feel we should continue to use this amazing herb in cultivated form from farmers. We are not only supporting family farms, we will not further deplete goldenseal from the wild. If we don't support the goldenseal farmers, they will grow something else, people will go back to wildcrafting, and we might lose this great herb.

My favorite way to take goldenseal root is in a tincture made with echinacea angustifolia root, yarrow and a little stevia or licorice (for blood sugar balance). See formula below. The tincture assimilates quickly into the blood stream and is tolerated by most, including children. It also can be used topically with great success. This is a formula everyone should have in their cupboards. It lasts a long time without refrigeration.

Attributes

Key Components: (including, but not limited to)

Vitamins A • B1 (thiamine) • B2 (riboflavin) • B3 (niacin) • B5 (pantothenic acid) • B6 (pyridoxine) • B9 (folic acid) • B12 (cobalamin) • Biotin • Choline • Inositol • PABA (Para-Amino Benzoic Acid) • C • E

Calcium • Copper • Iron • Manganese • Phosphorous • Potassium • Zinc

Starches • Alkaloids including: Berberine (yellow) • Hydrastine (white) • Canadine • Bitter

Berberine is anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-protozoa, antimalarial and antipyretic (reduces fever); it also has antispasmodic qualities. Hydrastine acts as a uterine hemostatic (stops bleeding) and antiseptic. Canadine acts as a sedative and muscle relaxant.

Catarrh

Mucous membranes are naturally moist internal surfaces that ease movement and absorption and they are a protection for the body against pathogens and toxins. Mucus is a thick, sticky fluid secreted by mucous membranes and glands. It can trap intruding toxins and

then eliminate them from the body. Inflamed mucous membranes and thickened, discolored, or excessive mucous congestion (beyond what the body can efficiently expel) are conditions known as 'catarrh.'

Catarrh can be problematic throughout the body. It is typically seen in the eyes, nose, sinuses, throat, bronchi, lungs, digestive tract, and urogenital organs. Catarrh can cause sore throats, colds, flu, pneumonia, fevers, swollen glands, and congestion in all the eliminative systems of the body. The problem contributes to such diseases as arthritis, asthma, hay fever, bronchitis, sinusitis, cystitis, vaginal infections, kidney stones, jaundice, etc. If catarrh collects in the blood stream and obstructs circulation, it can cause high blood pressure and stroke.

Along with pathogenic parasites, catarrh may be caused by eating processed foods, eating starches in excess, poor circulation, poor elimination, and lack of sunshine, fresh air or exercise. Along with proper diet, exercise and fresh air, herbs can help rid the body of congestive catarrhal conditions.

Anti-catarrhal Mucous Membranes

Goldenseal is an anti-catarrhal herb that affects the mucous membranes throughout the body. Mucous membranes line internal structures of the body including the respiratory system, digestive system, reproductive organs, the urethra, etc.

Goldenseal is referred to as the 'King of the Mucous Membranes,' because of its remarkable ability to heal, cleanse and tone the mucous membranes of the body.

It can be used at the onset of upper respiratory infections, or some believe, it is better employed once redness, swelling of the membranes, or excessive discharge of thick yellow or green mucus begins to occur. We have seen amazing success with both methods. Goldenseal helps both in cases of dry, parched mucous membranes and those with profuse thickened discharge.

Take as needed internally *and* topically as a fomentation (towel soaked in infusion or decoction and placed on affected area), gargle, ear drops, and nasal or eye wash.

Goldenseal is excellent as an antiseptic mouthwash for pyorrhea, or as a drink and gargle for tonsillitis and other throat problems. Snuffed up the nose, powdered goldenseal

root is good for nasal catarrh. It is especially indicated when mucous discharge is abundant or during an asthma attack.

Goldenseal is useful in superficial disorders of the eyes, and conjunctival inflammations, particularly when a catarrhal discharge is present. Used as an eyewash, goldenseal is mildly antibiotic and astringent. It is used to strengthen the eyes and reduce eye inflammation and infection.

Goldenseal may be used for all types of congestion and chronic inflammation of the respiratory and urogenital tracts. It is used for catarrh of the bladder and induces the flow of urine to speed pathogenic elimination. Ulceration of the internal coat of the bladder and other indolent (non-healing) ulcers may be repaired with the use of goldenseal. A full-strength infusion makes a healing vaginal douche for infections.

The liver may become congested as the body eliminates overabundant mucus and irritants. Goldenseal can help to soothe, support and heal hepatic (liver) congestion.

Use goldenseal in cases of catarrh of the intestines. When it is used with the herb cascara sagrada, goldenseal is an effective bowel tonic. Myrrh and goldenseal together are used to help treat ulcers of the stomach. Goldenseal will help reduce swollen hemorrhoids when used as a retention enema.

Goldenseal promotes respiratory function by increasing lung capacity, cleansing mucous membranes and fighting infection. It stimulates the respiratory and circulatory systems, increasing their tone and power.

Goldenseal is helpful for general debility and convalescence from diseases with excessive mucous discharges, protracted fevers, inflammation, nervous prostration, or where hemorrhaging has occurred.

Heart and Circulation

Goldenseal taken with cayenne helps strengthen the heart. The tone imparted to the heart muscle is permanent (rather than intermittent), and muscular nutrition is increased. Goldenseal is one of the few herbs that tones and sustains venous circulation.

Muscles

Goldenseal reduces muscular tenderness and soreness. It relaxes muscles, is anti-spasmodic and relieves tension headaches.

Blood Sugar | Goldenseal is a source of natural insulin and lowers blood sugar. It is useful in treating stress and anxiety due to high blood sugar. It also reduces swelling caused by high sugar levels.

Note:

Individuals with low blood sugar disorders could either take goldenseal with real licorice (counteracts goldenseal's low blood sugar effect), or substitute myrrh for goldenseal.

Women | Goldenseal can be used for female problems related to inflammation of the vagina, uterus and the urethra of the bladder. It normalizes profuse menstruation. Goldenseal may cause uterine contractions therefore should not be used until the last few weeks of pregnancy.

Goldenseal was listed in the 1934 British Pharmaceutical Codex as being useful in controlling uterine hemorrhage. Midwives use goldenseal to stop hemorrhaging after birth and to induce uterine contractions to return the uterus to its normal size.

Skin Breaks and Wounds | Goldenseal heals fissures and cracks in the skin, including those occurring on the breasts when nursing. Sprinkle goldenseal powder directly on any break in the skin, or make a paste by mixing with water or extra virgin olive oil to apply to the affected area.

Goldenseal is an antiseptic used to cleanse boils, wounds and ulcers. When the powder is applied topically, it helps prevent pitting of the skin from smallpox and heals ringworm without leaving a scar.

Goldenseal helps stop internal and external bleeding, reduces swelling, and speeds wound healing. Skin diseases, rashes and eruptions all benefit from goldenseal.

Acne, seborrhea, lupus erythematosus, boils, carbuncles and ulcers can be helped by the internal use alone, but topical use at the same time hastens healing.

Immune System | Berberine (an active ingredient in goldenseal) strengthens the immune system and has antimicrobial activity. Goldenseal activates macrophages (white blood cells that ingest pathogens and foreign material in the blood) and increases the blood supply to the spleen (produces white blood cells). Goldenseal shows tumor inhibitory action and has also been used for skin cancers.

<p><i>Digestion</i></p> <p><i>Drugs</i></p>	<p>Goldenseal is bitter to the taste and induces secretions of the salivary glands. It sharpens the appetite and aids digestion. It is indicated in gastric disorders and ulcerations, especially those with mucus or pus. It relieves irritation and afterward restores the tone of the tissues.</p> <p>Goldenseal is used for chronic gastritis and enteritis. It is a remedy for obstinate constipation. The intestines are gently stimulated to normal activity.</p> <p>Because of the popular, though false, perception that goldenseal can mask illicit drug use in urine tests, drug screening labs have begun checking for the presence of hydrastine (a component of goldenseal) in the urine as well. If found, hydrastine is considered possible proof that the person being tested is a drug user.</p>
<p>Herb Parts Used</p>	<p>The medicinal parts are the air-dried rhizome (underground stem) and root fibers. The leaf is not as potent (it contains approximately one-tenth the amount of active alkaloids), and is used principally as a general tonic.</p>
<p>Preparations and Remedies</p> <p><i>Powder and Tincture</i></p>	<p>Infusions, extracts, salves and capsules are made from the dried and powdered root.</p> <p><i>Wounds:</i> Powdered goldenseal root may be dusted directly onto wounds as an antibacterial dressing. Goldenseal tincture may be applied full-strength for treating infected wounds, eczema, hemorrhoids, and skin ulcerations. Salves may be similarly employed.</p> <p><i>Pyorrhea (gum disease):</i> Dip moistened toothbrush into goldenseal powder and brush teeth.</p> <p><i>Ringworm:</i> Use one level teaspoonful of powder in a half cup of warm water. Sweeten to taste and drink (dilute for children). Also apply powder topically as a salve or paste (mixed with extra virgin olive oil).</p> <p><i>Infection Formula:</i> 4 parts Goldenseal Root 3 parts Echinacea Angustifolia Root 2 parts Yarrow Flower 1 part Lobelia Herb Combine herbs and encapsulate or use to make a tincture.</p>

This formula is very powerful and gets results.

The herbs in this formula have been used for hundreds of years to help alleviate colds, flu and other infections. They are highly regarded by many, due to their incredible healing properties. The combination of these herbs are extremely effective, more so than the herbs taken individually.

Drops of goldenseal extract may be put in the nose for sinus infections. For middle ear infections and earaches accompanied by inflammation, warm goldenseal extract (to body temperature for comfort) and drop into the ear. The ear may also be cleansed with a goldenseal tea wash.

Kidney Formula: (see JUNIPER preparations)

Infusions

Goldenseal Tea:

Place one teaspoonsful of powdered root into a pint of boiling water. Let stand until cold. Drink one or two teaspoonsfuls, three to six times a day. For ulcers of the mouth and throat, use a goldenseal infusion as a gargle.

Urinary Tract Infection Tea: (see UVA URSI preparations)

Pregnancy Decoction: (see WILD YAM preparations)

Fomentations

As a fomentation (towel soaked in infusion or decoction and placed on affected area), use externally on open sores, inflammations, eczema, ringworm, erysipelas, and itchy skin afflictions.

Eye Wash

It is essential to keep utensils, containers and ingredients clean and sterile for all preparations that go directly on or into the eyes,

Eye Wash Tea:

Great for tired and irritated eyes, infections, and styes.
1/2-1 teaspoon Goldenseal root, cut or powdered
1/4-1/2 cup distilled Water, hot (not boiling)

Recommended alternative:

Add 1/2-1 teaspoon each:
Eyebright herb, Goldenseal root and Raspberry leaves

Pour hot water over the herb(s). Steep and cool for about ten minutes. Run infusion through a cloth to filter out any

grit. Keep unused liquid refrigerated and make a new batch every two to three days to avoid contamination.

Use a sterile eyedropper or glass eyewash cup to wash eyes with liquid, two to three times a day. After using the eyecup on one side, clean thoroughly before using for the other eye to prevent spreading infection from eye to eye. A tea-saturated cotton ball may also be used to apply to closed eyes. Use tea both internally and externally.

Alternate Method:

Use (non-alcohol based) goldenseal root tincture diluted in distilled water.

Optional:

Add a pinch of cayenne – it will sting a lot, but it is remarkably effective for helping the body heal cataracts. Wash eyes with milk if burning sensation becomes intolerable. The fat in the milk will dilute the 'heat' of the cayenne.

Soothing Eye Compress: (see EYEBRIGHT preparations)

Nasal Douche For treating sinusitis, use a goldenseal root cold infusion at full strength, once daily. Put into a sinus wash syringe or a neti pot and rinse.

Vaginal Douche Use a goldenseal tincture in two cups warm water, twice daily, or goldenseal root warm infusion (full strength) twice daily.

Enema/ Douche: (see RED RASPBERRY preparations)

Poultices *Flaxseed Poultice:* (see FLAXSEED preparations)

Slippery Elm Poultice: (see SLIPPER ELM preparations)

Oil *Goldenseal Oil:*

1 ounce Goldenseal root
8 ounces Flaxseed oil or Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Mix thoroughly and let stand for 24 hours. Strain through clean unbleached muslin. Apply freely as needed for burns, itching, and skin eruptive diseases (smallpox, measles, scarlet fever, etc).

Salve *Goldenseal / Myrrh Antiseptic Salve:*
This is a wonderful antiseptic salve for scrapes and closed

wounds. It is best to let wounds drain and close on their own before sealing them off with the salves of any kind. Use the powder alone, or as a poultice for open wounds.

- 1 oz. powdered Goldenseal
- 1 oz. powdered Myrrh gum
- 4 oz. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1/4 oz. Beeswax
- Essential oil(s) if desired

Note: It is possible to make more than one batch at a time

Measure oil into a crock pot and bring the temperature no higher than 80-100° F, by heating on the warm setting. Stir in herbs and maintain this temperature (with lid on) for 24 hours, stirring occasionally.

When mixture is ready (partially determined by the loss of herb color and smell), line a colander with two layers of unbleached broadcloth or muslin. Place the colander inside a collector bowl and pour in the contents of the crock pot. Strain and squeeze out all possible oil into the collector bowl (use gloves while squeezing). The herbs (left inside the cloth) become dry and powdery, return them to the soil or discard.

Return the herb-infused oil to the wiped-down clean crock pot. Cut in the beeswax and slowly heat until melted (beeswax liquefies at 148.4° F). Once melted, turn off the heat. To determine if enough beeswax has been added, spoon a small amount onto a plate to cool. The room temperature consistency should be gel-like, without liquefying. In warmer climates, it is necessary to add additional beeswax to set up properly.

When satisfied, mix in essential oils (if used) and pour mixture into clean ointment jars (one to two ounce jars are a convenient size for single or family use). This salve lasts up to three years in the refrigerator, or for several months when stored at room temperature.

Ointment

Skin Ointment: (see LICORICE preparations)

Safety

Goldenseal is generally considered safe. For those who have low blood sugar, goldenseal should be taken with true licorice or it can be replaced with myrrh.

Goldenseal may cause uterine contractions. Its use is not recommended for pregnancy until the last few weeks.

Plant Profile

Natural Habitat:

Goldenseal is native to the moist woods and damp meadows of eastern North America and cultivated elsewhere.

Description

Goldenseal is a low herbaceous perennial (after tops die down in the winter, the plant grows back from a persistent rootstock in the spring) characterized by an erect, purplish, hairy stem (6-12 inches tall) and small, greenish-white flowers that bloom in early spring and subsequently become clusters of red berries. The berries are inedible and contain 1 or 2 hard, glossy black seeds.

The plant has several three to seven-lobed leaves and a thick, yellow, knotty and twisted rhizome (underground stem) one or two inches long, out of which grows yellow root fibers (a foot or more in length).

Younger rhizomes are well marked on the upper surface with cup-like depressions (looking something like a seal, from which it gets its common name) showing where the stems of the previous years have grown, died and broken off. These marks become less noticeable as the rhizome ages.

Harvesting

The fresh root is a vivid yellow color, both within and without, but the outside becomes dull-brown upon drying. The best rhizomes have a large amount of yellow juice, which may leave the interior yellow or orange-yellow after drying. Upon fracture of the dried root, the interior is lemon-yellow. With age, the yellow pigment breaks down and the color turns greenish-yellow or even brown. These should be rejected as being of inferior quality.

Goldenseal is considered to be a 'bitter' herb. The taste is quite bitter and the smell is strong, characteristic and disagreeable. Once the herb is dried and powdered, it has a distinctive yellow color which stains when mixed with liquid. Optimum plant development requires approximately five years from seed, and three to four years from root bulbs. After the plant seeds ripen in the autumn, sufficiently aged roots are harvested, washed, and air dried in partial shade. Leaves and stems are collected in the late summer for drying and preserving.
