

# Althea (Marshmallow)

*Latin Name: Althaea officinalis*

MUCILAGE; DIURETIC; LAXATIVE

USE Whole plant; ROOTS for extracts, syrups, ointments; LEAVES for poultices, infusions, fomentations and ointments

Native to Europe and western Asia; Typically found in marshy habitats

## HISTORY

- 1) Romans (Horace and Martial) used leaves and root: Laxative powers
- 2) (Greek) Hippocrates wrote in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. for: WOUNDS
- 3) Greek physicians recommended infusions for TOOTHACHE; sting from insects; mixed with sweet wine for COUGHS
- 4) Egyptians, Syrians, Greeks and Armenians – used as a FOOD, especially in times of crop failure
- 5) Arab physicians made POULTICES of leaves and applied to skin to reduce Inflammation
- 6) Eaten anciently to reduce sexual desire
- 7) French used powdered roots to make soft lozenges to soothe COUGHS and SORE THROATS; Gargles helped heal mouth INFECTIONS and INFLAMED GUMS; syrup for stimulating the KIDNEYS
- 8) Middle Ages common remedy for chest and LUNG ailments, DIARRHEA, STOMACH upsets and ulcers, BLADDER infections; INSOMNIA

## QUALITIES

- 1) NUTRIENTS: VIT A; B1; B2; B3; B5; B6; B9; B12; Choline; Calcium; Iron; Sodium
  - High in Vit A and Calcium
  - MUCILAGE found in whole plant, highest amount in roots = soothing & healing
  - Sugars yield sweet taste
- 2) SOOTHES INFLAMMATION and IRRITATION (Inside & Out)
  - WOUNDS infected BOILS; Burns; Gangrene; Bruises; Sprains; Insect bites
  - Draws out poisons and debris – Poultice with Cayenne is very effective
  - MUCOUS MEMBRANES; Coats, Soothes and Heals
  - RESPIRATORY TRACT: CONGESTION; Inflamed Gums; Sore Throat; BRONCHIAL INFECTIONS; EMPHYSEMA; LUNGS; ASTHMA; WHOOPING COUGH; PNEUMONIA; Colds; Cough
  - STUDY (cough relief): In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, subjects in the marshmallow root group had significant improvements in mean cough scores. (Rouhi 2007)
  - URINARY TRACT: has non-astringent, soothing effect; UTI; BLADDER; URINARY BLEEDING; KIDNEY STONES; BEDWETTING; Cystitis

- STUDY REVIEW (cystitis): ...soothing, anti-inflammatory herb useful in treatment of cystitis. (Levy 1997)  
- BOWELS; Constipation; Soothing Diarrhea; Dysentery; Stomach; Stomach Ulcers; Inflamed Bowels; Aid for weight loss; NATURAL FIBERS helps regulate bowel activity and colonic flora

3) LACTATION; BREAST MILK Enriched and Increased

4) NERVOUS CONDITIONS

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## Althea References

### Herb History and General Information

Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckmann J, eds., *Herbal Medicine Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Austin, TX: American Botanical Council; Newton, MA: Integrative Medicine Communications; 2000

Felter, Harvey Wickes, M.D., and John Uri Lloyd, Phr. M., Ph.D., *King's American Dispensatory*; 1898. See excerpts at <http://www.henriettes-herb.com> accessed August 6, 2014

Grieve, M., *A Modern Herbal, Vol I & II*. New York and London: Hafner Publishing Co.; 1967. See excerpts at [www.botanical.com](http://www.botanical.com) accessed August 6, 2014

Keith, Velma J. and Monteen Gordon, *The How To Herb Book*. Pleasant Grove, Utah: Mayfield Publications; 1996

Ritchason, Jack, N.D., *The Little Herb Encyclopedia*. Pleasant Grove, Utah: Woodland Health Books; 1995

### Studies

Levy, Betsy, Review of Botanicals Useful in Treatment of Cystitis. *HerbClip*. November 19, 1997 (No. 111977-123). Austin, TX: American Botanical Council. Review of Botanical Medicine for Cystitis by Yarnell, Eric, *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*.

Rouhi H, Ganji F., Effect of *Althaea officinalis* on cough associated with ACE inhibitors. *Pakistan J Nutr*. May-June 2007;6(3):256-258. [PubMed]

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Additional info on Studies:

## CYSTITIS

Levy, Betsy, Review of Botanicals Useful in Treatment of Cystitis. *HerbClip*. November 19, 1997 (No. 111977-123). Austin, TX: American Botanical Council. Review of Botanical Medicine for Cystitis by Yarnell, Eric, *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*. ...Soothing, anti-inflammatory herbs that may benefit cystitis include corn silk, couch grass, marshmallow (Althea officinalis), slippery elm (Ulmus fulva), goldenrod (Solidago virgaurea), white poplar (Populus tremuloides), licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra)... (Levy 1997)

## COUGH

Marshmallow Root may have a Beneficial Effect on Coughing Due to ACE Inhibitors, *HerbClip*. March 14, 2008 (No. 070577-348). Austin, TX: American Botanical Council.

...Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor drugs are widely used for the treatment of hypertension, heart failure, heart attack, and certain kidney diseases. Although ACE inhibitors are generally well tolerated, up to 40% of people taking the drugs develop a dry, tickly, and bothersome cough. Marshmallow root (Althaea officinalis) contains mucilage and has been used to suppress coughing and to treat inflammation and irritation of the respiratory and intestinal tracts. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of marshmallow root on coughing associated with use of ACE inhibitors.

This randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted at Shahrekord Medical University in Iran. The subjects were men and women who had developed a dry cough while taking an ACE inhibitor for hypertension...

Sixty subjects completed the trial. Subjects in the marshmallow root group had significant improvements in mean cough scores, dropping from 2.66 to 1.23 ( $P < 0.05$ ). Subjects in the placebo group had a nonsignificant improvement in cough scores, dropping from 2.70 to 2.33. There were no significant differences in the spirometry tests between the marshmallow group and the placebo group.

The authors conclude that marshmallow root has a beneficial effect on coughing induced by the use of ACE inhibitors. Because the coughing may lead to discontinuation of the drugs, marshmallow root may have an important role in decreasing cough and improving compliance with the drugs... -Heather S. Oliff, PhD (Rouhi 2007)