

Symphytum officinale
Family: Boraginaceae – borage, forget-me-nots
Parts Used: leaf (blossoms), root

Other names for comfrey include bruisewort, knitbone, boneset, and healing herb, all which refer to it's amazing bone healing properties. I have used this herb more times than I can count on broken bones, lacerations, sprains, bone health, and many injuries. It truly is a bone and tissue repairing plant. One of my favorites!

Properties

Alterative, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, antispasmodic, antitumor, astringent, cell proliferator, demulcent/emollient, expectorant, hemostatic/styptic, vulnerary.

Energetics: cooling, moistening, secondary drying
Systems Affected: bone, skin, respiratory, mucus

Uses

- Cell regeneration: bones, muscles, cartilage, all body tissue
- Broken, fractured, bruised, deteriorating bone
- Bone health, building and repairing
- Damaged tissues and torn ligaments inside and out
- Strains, sprains, bruises, sports injuries, etc.
- Wounds, burns, cuts, abrasions, boils, sores, rashes, skin eruptions, punctures, etc.
- Bleeding and hemorrhaging inside and out, first aid
- Any type of skin condition such as dry, chapped skin, sunburn, scar tissue, rashes, tags, irritation, chaffing, bites, stings, etc.
- Acne, wrinkles, skin and hair care.
- Eczema and psoriasis (external soothing while treating internal for root cause)
- Cracked nipples, anal fissures and breast pain.
- Back, joint and muscle pain and inflammation, gout, rheumatism, carpal tunnel, etc.
- General aches and pain
- Hernias, varicose veins, inflamed bunions, ulcers, etc.
- Any type of inflammation both internal and external
- Facial care, tones and firms skin, wrinkles and acne, etc.
- Breaks up milk knots in nursing mothers
- After birth healing (soaking in a comfrey bath aids cell repair)
- Ulcerated organs and tissue, inside and out

- Respiratory support; croup, bronchitis, asthma, etc.
- Mouth, gum, teeth, and throat infection and issues
- Stomach, bowel, intestinal issues and disorders, dry, inflamed digestive tissues (traditional use)
- Gangrene, dysentery, lymph congestion, infections, degenerative conditions (traditional use)

Herb Preparations

- Oil, salve, balm, ointment, cream
- Bath, soak, steam
- Washes, eye, wound, mouth, gargle, etc.
- Compress, poultice
- Powder, sprinkle, capsules
- Extracts, tincture, liniment
- Tea
- Cosmetics, facial and skin care, lip balm, hair care, etc.

Care/Harvesting

- Comfrey likes moist soil near streams and ponds with dappled sunlight.
- Hard to start with seed so it is best propagated by root, divide in mid-late spring or fall for replanting. Plant a one-inch piece of root and cover with about three inches of soil. Keep moist, but well drained. Check your local nursery.
- Can be a vigorous growing herb so take care where you plant it. I personally have only seen this happen when the root is disturbed. I have a 5-year-old plant that continually grows in a clump and hasn't spread.
- Snip leaves any time during the growing season, using gloves to protect from stiff hairs. You can also cut the entire plant down when it gets heavy and falls over. It will grow right back, and these are the leaves you want to use internally if you choose to use it that way.
- Studies have shown the leaf to be just as potent as the root but there is some that say the roots are more potent. If you want to harvest the roots wait until the plant is done flowering and then dig up, wash well and dry in a dehydrator on the lowest setting. I have only ever used the leaf and flowers tops with amazing results!
- Use for composting and mulch. Add to your compost pile or cut the leaves up and sprinkle around other plants for a multi-purpose mulch and fertilizer. You can also make a compost tea by stuffing a jar with leaves packed down and cover with a lid. The leaves will decompose into a "black tea". Dilute the tea with 10-20 parts water and use to fertilize garden plants. *Just a warning that this tea is pretty stinky so don't be alarmed.

Wild Comfrey (Hounds Tongue)
There is a species of comfrey that grows in the wild called Hounds Tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), named for the shape of the leaves resembling a dog's tongue. It has similar properties but do to the stronger nature should only be used externally.

Safety

There is a lot of controversy around the use of this herb for internal purposes. Some say it contains liver damaging chemicals, while others claim it to be perfectly safe when used prudently. Many herbalists love this herb and continue to use it internally for small periods of time to cure an ailment. Dr. Christopher recommends using the second cutting for internal use. Do your research on this herb and use your light of Christ to decide for yourself and family how you will use it. Personally, I love comfrey and have used it internally with wonderful results for acute conditions (not long term).

- Handle plant with care due to the prickly hairs.
- Clean wounds thoroughly before applying.
- Do not take internally when pregnant or nursing.