

Althaea officinalis
Family: *Malvaveae* - hibiscus, hollyhock, okra
Parts Used: roots, leaves, flowers

Mallow is best known for its soothing and anti-inflammatory properties. Two main mallows are used medicinally, Common Mallow, found in yards, ditches, marshes and low ground as a weed and Marshmallow, which is cultivated in gardens. They can be used interchangeably and in the place of slippery elm.

Properties

Expectorant, diuretic, demulcent, emollient, anti-inflammatory, nutritive, vulnerary, laxative.

Energetics: cooling, moistening
Systems Affected: lung, digestive

Uses

- Support and sooth kidney, bladder, and urinary system.
- Urinary disorders such as kidney stones and urinary tract infections.
- Respiratory issues such as bronchitis, irritating coughs, pneumonia, etc.
- Wounds, burns, boils, sores, and skin ulcerations of any kind (poultice or compress).
- Bug bites and stings (make a poultice with the leave by chewing or rubbing).
- Soothes irritation and inflammation in the digestive and urinary systems.
- Helps neutralize stomach acid, aiding in stomach ulcers and heartburn.
- Gout
- Eye infections and sore eye (eye wash with the tea)
- Mastitis (use hot compress or fomentation)
- Sore nipples (gel or salve)
- Soothes skin irritation (gel or salve)
- Venereal issues (douche with tea, salve, bath)

Herb Preparations

- Tea
- Poultice
- Gruel: chop root and add water (or use root powder) once a gel forms this can be used internally or externally to soothe inflammation and irritation.
- Tincture, syrup
- Herbal oil
- Salve, ointment, balm
- Powder, capsules

- Bath (sooth and moisturize skin)
- Food: all parts can be used as a vegetable. Root can be used as a thickener and to make marshmallows! Flowers will turn into “cheeses” that can be eaten.

Care/Harvesting

The plant can be grown from seeds sown directly in the spring or started indoors and transplanted. It can also be started from cuttings or root divisions in the autumn. Space about 2 feet apart. Loves loamy, moist soil (hence the name “marsh”). The wild version, Common Mallow, is a well-known “weed” found along streams, marshes, ditches, and low ground. It is a crawling annual with rounded leaves, pale pink flowers and fruits referred to as “cheeses”.

- Flowers can be harvested in the summer right before they are fully open. They are expectorant and used to make cough syrup. They can be dried for future use but must be stored in a dark container. Carefully remove the flowers with snips so they do not get bruised.
- Leaves are best harvested after flowering in the late summer – although they can be used anytime.
- Roots can be harvested in the fall or winter after the plant is over 2 years old. Pull or dig out tap root and wash, peel and then use immediately or dry them in slices, may need to use a dehydrator on low setting to
  dry thoroughly.