CHAMOMILE, GERMAN

Matricaria recutita
[mat-ri-KAR-ee-uh re-KOO-tee-ta]
(previously Matricaria chamomilla)

Family: Compositae

Names: Maythen, Manzanilla (Mexican), Chamaimelon, Camamyle, Ground Apple, Whig Plant, Wild Chamomile, Scented Mayweed; Rumianek pospolity, maruna (Polish); Camomille (French); Kamille (German); Camomilla (Italian); Manzanilla (Spanish); Khamomili (German)

Description: Annual. This low daisy-like flower grows 2-8 inches high and has a pleasantly aromatic odor when crushed. The leaves are pinnately divided and very narrow. The flowers have yellow disk-florets and white ray-florets. The center of the flower is cone-shaped. The sepal-like bracts are brownish in color. There are no chaffy scales among the disk-florets. Fruit are tiny, straw-colored seeds. Blooms June to July.

Cultivation: Germination is from 10-12 days. Space 6-12 inches. Soil temperature 55-60 degrees F. Preferred soil is dry, light, sandy and well drained. A rich soil produces lush growth, although fewer flowers. Best soil pH is 5-8. Full sun. The seeds are sown in spring or autumn and can be transplanted when young. Sow early since the young plants become leggy if it gets too hot. Water gently when young. The flower heads are picked in full bloom, in summer, just as the petals slightly droop. Using a blueberry rake helps the time-consuming hand harvest. Spread them thinly over a wire screen and dry them carefully and quickly in a shady, airy place away from direct sun. They should not be turned. The flowers absorb moisture easily and should be stored in a dark container with a good lid. Chamomile has an inhibitory effect on nematodes within a radius of three feet and really can strengthen soil and other plants. Chamomile also absorbs lime and passes it on to other plants. Especially good companion plant for cabbage and onions, strengthening them and keeping away pest.

 Constituents: Volatile oil (proazulenes, chamazulene upon distillation), farnesine, alpha-bisabolol, spiroether; flavonoids (anthemidin, luteolin, rutin, quercimertrin); bitter glycosides (anthemic acid); coumarins,
tannins, plant acids (valerianic); polysaccharides, salicylate, tryptophan, amino acids

Properties: anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, relaxant, carminative, mild bitter, antiallergenic

History: Chamomile’s daisylike flowers reminded the ancient Egyptians of the sun. They used it to treat fever, particularly the recurring fevers of malaria. The Greeks, inspired by chamomile’s distinct apple-like fragrance, named it kamai (“ground”) melon (“apple”), and the Spanish call it manzanilla, or “little apple.” The ancient Egyptians dedicated it to their sun god and used it in their aromatherapy practice. They also rubbed it on sore muscles and used it against malaria. The Romans, who introduced it into the northern countries, called it the “plant of doctors.” It owes its name matricaria to its regenerating qualities for the uterus. The flower is said to be dedicated to St. Anne, the Mother of the Virgin, because of the herb’s botanical name. “Matricaria” is derived from “mater and cara”, which means “beloved mother.” Chamomile’s legacy lives on, as children throughout the world hear how Peter Rabbit’s mother gave him chamomile to calm him down after a tense night of eating Mr. McGregor’s garden.

Energetics: bitter, spicy, neutral

Meridians/Organs affected: liver, stomach, lungs

Medicinal uses: German chamomile has been taken for digestive problems since at least the 1st century AD. Gentle and efficacious, it is very suitable for children. The herb is valuable for pain, indigestion, acidity, gas, gastritis, bloating, and colic. It is also used for hiatus hernia, peptic ulcer, Crohn’s disease and irritable bowel syndrome. German chamomile, which contains spiroether and bisabolol, very strong antispasmodics, relax tense, aching muscles and easies menstrual pain. It also appears to have relaxing action on the smooth muscle lining of the digestive tract. One study shows chamomile relaxes the digestive tract as well as the opium-based drug papaverine. Chamomile also may help prevent stomach ulcers and speed their healing. In one experiment, two groups of animals were fed a chemical known to cause ulcers. Those also given chamomile developed significantly fewer. Then the animals who developed ulcers were divided into two groups. Those fed chamomile recovered more quickly. It also relieves irritability and promotes sleep, especially in children. German chamomile is useful for hay fever and asthma. The proazulenes in the herb produce chamazulene on steam distillation, which is markedly antiallergenic. Externally, it can be applied to sore, itchy skin and eczema. It also relieves eyestrain. A cream made from German chamomile was tested in 1987 for its ability to heal wounds and produced very good results. Apply it externally for disinfecting and anti-inflammatory treatments in the form of packs, baths, and compresses using a strong tea, diluted chamomile tincture or a liquid chamomile extract. In 1993, a trial using German chamomile and 4 other herbs showed them to be most effective at easing infantile colic. Historically, chamomile poultices have been placed on cancers, and its sesquiterpene lactones do show immune system-stimulating and antitumor activity.

Inflamed oral mucosa can also be treated with chamomile tea. For stomatitis, an uncomfortable inflammation of the mouth’s mucous membranes, and canker sores, the mouth is rinsed with the tea or a liquid chamomile extract into one glass of water.

Due to its antispasmodic properties Chamomile is a good remedy for all cramping pains, especially for abdominal cramping in children. At the same time it has a carminative effect of relieving flatulence. In pediatric medicine chamomile is used as a tea or syrup. The effect can be increased by placing a hot chamomile pad on the painful area. To treat cramps, mix equal parts of chamomile flowers and silverweed to make a tea. Chamomile is a classic remedy for teething pains in children. For this, use chamomile in its homeopathic form or as teething tablets.
Because the boiling process destroys the medicinal essential oils in chamomile tea, it is advisable to brew the dried flowers in hot water and let it steep covered for several minutes. And be sure to drink it hot.

APPLICATIONS:
Cream: rub onto sore or itchy skin
Infusion with flower heads: for a good night’s sleep, drink a cup last thing at night. To relax fractious and overtired children, infuse 4 tsp dried herb in 500 ml water and strain into a bath
Tincture: for irritable bowel syndrome take 1 tsp diluted with 100 ml water 3 times a day.
Essential oil: for diaper rash, combine 5 drops with 20 ml carrier oil and apply.
Oil: Place freshly crushed chamomile flowers in a clear mason jar and cover them with cold pressed sunflower oil or olive oil. Place the jar, tightly lidded, in a sunny place for 2 or 3 weeks. Strain the oil and discard the flowers, pressing them out well. Add a few drops of essential oil of chamomile. Use as a liniment for back pain, sore muscles, neuralgia, kidney pain, facial neuralgia, abdominal pain and diaper rash.
Syrup: 100 grams fresh chamomile flowers, 50 ml vodka or other grain spirit, 200 ml distilled water, 300 gr sugar. Crush the chamomile flowers in a mortar, moisten with the alcohol, pour the mixture into a jar, and top off with distilled water. Place the jar, tightly lidded, in the sun for 2 days and shake it occasionally. Strain off the flowers and dissolve the sugar in the liquid by bringing, it to a simmer, stirring constantly. Pour the syrup into bottles and store in a cool place. Administer by tablespoon.
Ginger-Chamomile Delight: 1 part chamomile flowers, 1 part grated fresh ginger root, ¼ cup cow’s, soy, rice or almond milk, honey or maple syrup to taste. Place the herbs in a pot and cover with boiling water. Stir well, cover, and steep 15-20 minutes. Strain, add the milk of your choice, and sweeten to taste. Sip slowly and enjoy as needed, preferably after dinner or before bedtime. Great for digestion and helps relieve stomach and/or uterine cramps.

Homeopathy: Homeopaths use Chamomilla (German chamomile) for earaches and other childhood conditions, especially when the child is whiny, irritable, snappish, thirsty, hot or restless.

Veterinary Medicine: The tea can be administered internally for soothe cramps, relieve flatulence and heal wounds. Apply it externally to cleanse and heal wounds. Colic in horses is aided by a steam bath with a hot chamomile infusion. Place a pot of hot water and chamomile flowers under the horse and allow the steam to rise up over the area of complaint. Chamomile tea also helps dogs with intestinal trouble and diarrhea.

Flower Essence: Those needing Chamomile flower essence are subject to very changeable moods and ever-fluctuating emotions. Their “inner weather” is stormy and easily “clouded” until they shift their consciousness to remember that the sun is always shining serenely behind all the outer phenomena. People needing Chamomile tend to accumulate psychic tension throughout the day, particularly in the stomach region. Chamomile helps such souls to release tension from the stomach and solar plexus areas, and to harmonize their inner solar forces for greater emotional peace and stability. It subjects the many small emotions which vex the soul life, helping to consolidate these into a more fundamental soul essence of serenity and equanimity.

Cosmetic Uses: Its apple aroma is the fragrance in many herbal skin-care products. And it has been used in shampoos since the days of the Vikings because it adds luster to blond hair. Chamazulene, a strong anti-inflammatory, is produced when the essential oil is steam-distilled. It is used in expensive cosmetics to reduce facial puffiness. Chamomile flowers cleanse and soothe the skin and are tolerated by every skin type but especially for sensitive, dry, chapped skin. Use them in steam baths, crèmes, compresses, and packs. Chamomile creams are used on dry,
sensitive skin, enlarged capillaries, acne, and for skin allergies. As a rinse it brings out highlights in dark hair. Two chamomile the bags, steeped in hot water a couple of minutes, can be placed on the eyes to relieve strain.

**Chamomile-Fig Eye and Facial Soother:** ½ cup water, 1 black tea bag, 3 chamomile tea bags or 3 Tbsp loose tea, ½ fig, ¼ cucumber (not peeled), 1 russet potato (scrubbed and chopped, do not peel); Bring water to a boil; remove from heat and add all 4 tea bags or black tea bag and loose chamomile. Steep for ½ hour. Remove tea bags and strain if necessary to remove loose chamomile. In a blender, mix ¼ cup of the tea with fig, cucumber and potato on medium speed for 45 seconds. Apply gently with one finger around the eyes and leave for 5-10 minutes. Rinse off with warm water. Makes 1 ¼ cups. Cover and refrigerate; discard after 4 days.

**Chamomile and Calendula Hair Lightener:** 4 cups water, 2 cups dried chamomile flowers, 2 cups dried calendula flowers, 1 Tbsp lemon juice, 1 Tbsp extract. In a saucepan, bring water, chamomile, and calendula to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes. Remove from heat and cool, stirring in lemon juice and extract. When cooled enough for application, massage into hair, making sure that concentrated amounts stay in hair, and cover with plastic. Leave on for at least 40 minutes, then rinse with warm water. Use every other day for lasting effects. Cover and refrigerate; discard after 5 days.

**Ritual Uses:** Gender: Masculine; Planet: Sun; Element: water; Basic Powers: Prosperity and meditation. Use in prosperity charms to draw money. Add to incenses intended to bring on restful states for meditation. Induces sleep if burned. Yellow chamomile brings the power of the sun to love potions, money spells, and rites of purification. Sprinkle it around the house to ward off hexes.

**Toxicity:** A study found the likelihood of acute allergy to chamomile quite low. Two out of 25 people already allergic to other plants in the Asteraceae family were found to be allergic to chamomile as well.

**Culinary Uses:** Younger flowers have lighter flavor. Make sure the petals are just turning back to get the best flavor. Young sprigs are used as a seasoning.

**Recipes:**

**Camomile Scallop Surprise**
½ cup dry white wine
½ cup fish or chicken stock
1 small onion finely chopped
2 tsp chopped parsley
6 sprigs chamomile
1 tsp freshly ground pepper
½ tsp salt
500 g scallops, sliced
1 Tbsp butter
125 g mushrooms, finely sliced
2 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
1 extra Tbsp butter
1 Tbsp flour
½ cup soft breadcrumbs

Combine wine and half stock in saucepan. Add onion, 1 tsp parsley, pepper and salt and 3 sprigs of camomile. Bring this mixture to the boil and add the scallops. Lower heat and gently simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat, strain and reserve liquid. Sauté mushrooms in 1 Tbsp butter, stirring frequently. Add tomatoes and remaining 3 camomile sprigs and cook gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, and discarding camomile sprigs, add scallops. In a separate pan melt the butter over a low heat and stir in flour to form a roux. Gradually add the reserved stock, stirring constantly until thickened. Combine with tomato and scallop mixture, stirring until thoroughly mixed. Divide between 2 large ramekins and sprinkle with soft breadcrumbs to form a crust and dot with a little butter. Bake in 350F oven until golden and bubbling. Sprinkle with finely chopped parsley. Canned salmon may be substituted for scallops (Herbs for Home and Garden)
Chamomile Fruit Salad
4 peaches
6 Victoria plums
3 figs
3 apples
1 cup of chamomile tea made from 1 heaped tsp chamomile flowers
1 dessertspoon chamomile petals
Wash, core, remove stones, peel and slice all the fruit as necessary. Put into a serving bowl. Make the chamomile into a tea, adding 1 teaspoon honey and a slice of lemon. Cover and let it stand for 20 minutes. Strain the cooled tea and pour it over the fruit salad. Sprinkle over the chamomile petals and serve. (Good Enough to Eat)

Pan Roasted Lobster with Lillet and Chamomile Garlic Sauce
2 2-lb live lobsters
3 Tbsp olive oil
cayenne
sea salt
1 1/2 tsp chopped chamomile buds
1 tsp coconut milk
1 tsp honey
1/2 kaffir lime leaf, slivered or substitute lemon grass
1/2 tsp mashed roasted garlic
1/4 tsp fennel seed
1 Tbsp orange juice
2 Tbsp unsalted butter
2 Tbsp Lillet wine
Cook the lobsters. Remove the claws from the lobsters at the body. Steam the claws for 9 minutes, remove the meat, and set it aside. Discard the shells, or reserve them for use in another recipe. Cut the bodies (with the tail still attached) lengthwise. From the body cavity remove the tomalley and discard it or save it for another use. Place the split lobsters, split side down, on paper towels. In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil on high heat. Season the cavities and tails with a little cayenne and sea salt. Place the lobsters, split side down, in the skillet. Reduce the heat to medium, and cook for 4 minutes. Add the remaining olive oil and the chamomile, coconut milk, honey, lime leaf, garlic, fennel seed, and orange juice. Increase the heat, and bring the mixture to a boil. Remove the lobster from the skillet, and add the reserved claw meat. Bring the mixture to a boil once again, add the butter, and reduce the sauce by one-third. Remove the skillet from the heat. Arrange the lobster bodies, cavity side up, on a plate. Fill the cavity with the claw meat. Add the wine to the sauce in the skillet, and pass the sauce through a fine mesh strainer over the lobster. Serve immediately. (My Favorite Herb)

Salmon Tartare with a Sauterne and Chamomile Vinaigrette
Vinaigrette:
1/2 cup sauténe
2 Tbsp olive oil
3 tsp lemon juice
1 1/2 tsp chamomile buds
1 tsp honey
1 tsp salt
1 tsp snipped chives
Salmon:
2 Tbsp chopped chervil
1/2 cup frisée (young chicory)
4 thin, 8-inch slices English cucumber
Salad Mix:
2 Tbsp chopped chervil
1/8 cup frisée
1/8 cup dulse
4 tsp fresh chamomile leaves and buds
To prepare the vinaigrette, combine the wine, oil, lemon juice, chamomile, honey, salt, and chives. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. To prepare the tartare, dice the salmon, and roll it inside the cucumber strips. Set aside. To prepare the salad, mix together the chervil, frisée, dulse, and chamomile leaves and buds. To serve, place the cucumber-rolled salmon in the middle of a plate. Top with some vinaigrette and salad mix. (My Favorite Herb)

Turkey Rice Casserole
5 Tbsp butter
4 Tbsp flour
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp freshly ground white pepper
1/8 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
4 or 5 chamomile sprigs
2 ½ cups half-and-half
1 tsp softened butter
4 Tbsp butter
1 cup minced mushrooms
½ cup each minced celery with some leaves, green pepper and onion
3 cups cubed cooked turkey
half-and-half
1 2oz jar pimento, chopped
3 Tbsp Madeira (optional)
4-6 cups freshly cooked rice
¼ tsp celery salt
1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper
paprika

Melt the butter until bubbly. Add the flour, salt, white pepper, nutmeg and chamomile. Cook and stir without browning. Gradually add the half-and-half. Cook and stir until smooth and thickened; continue cooking, stirring often, 10 minutes. Remove from heat, discard chamomile and swirl in the softened butter to prevent crust from forming. Set aside.

Sauté the butter, mushrooms, celery, green pepper and onion, covered, for 5 minutes. Add to the sauce along with the cooked turkey. Cook and stir over medium heat 10 minutes, adding additional half-and-half if too thick. Remove from heat and add the pimento and Madeira. Set aside. Place in bottom of heavily buttered shallow casserole the rice. Sprinkle with the celery salt and black pepper. Pour the turkey mixture over rice and sprinkle with the paprika. Bake in 350F oven 30 minutes or until heated through. If making ahead and refrigerating, cook 40 minutes or longer. (The Edible Ornamental Garden)

Herbal Digestive
1 Tbsp fresh chamomile
1 Tbsp chopped mint
1 Tbsp lemon verbena
1 Tbsp lemon balm or zest from 1 lemon (no pith)
2 cloves
1 stick cinnamon
1 Tbsp coriander (crushed seeds)
1 Tbsp lavender flowers
¼ cup sugar

Place ingredients in mason jar and pour enough brandy to cover completely or fill mason jar. Steep 4-6 weeks, strain and decant into smaller bottles (The Madison Herb Society Cookbook)

Chamomile Wine
1 liter dry white wine
1 cup dried chamomile flowers
grated zest of 1 orange
1 ½ oz light rum (optional)
4 Tbsp honey (or to taste)

Pour wine into a clean glass jar or bottle. Add chamomile, orange zest and rum. Cover and steep for 1 week. Strain through a coffee filter, add honey to taste and pour it into a clean container. Seal and store for up to 1 year. (Herb Companion, Aug/Sept 2003)

References:
The Madison Herb Society Cookbook, Madison Herb Society, 1995

Resources:
Companion Plants;  www.companionplants.com
plants, seed

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