**CHELIDONIUM MAJUS**

**Papaveraceae**

**Names:** greater celandine, swallowwort, garden celandine, wartweed, felonwort, Grecian may, devil’s milk, swallow herb, celydoyne, killwort, sightwort, tetterwort; Chelidoine, eclair, salogne, herbe aux Hirondelles; Herbe aux verrues, Grande chélidoine (French); Schollkraut, Schwulstkraut, Augenkraut, Warzendraut (German); Bai qu caï (Chinese); kusa no ou (Japanese); Jaskolcze ziele, glistnik, Glistewnik (Polish)

**Pharmaceutical Name:** Herba Chelidonii

**Description:** The Celandine is a herbaceous perennial. The root is thick and fleshy. The stem, which is slender, round and slightly hairy, grows from 1½ to 3 feet high and is much branched; at the points where the branches are given off, it is swollen and jointed and breaks very easily. The whole plant abounds in a bright, orange-colored juice, which is emitted freely wherever the stems or leaves are broken. This juice stains the hands strongly and has a persistent and nauseous taste and a strong, disagreeable smell. It is acrid and a powerful irritant. The yellowish-green leaves, which are much paler, almost greyish below, are very thin in texture, drooping immediately on gathering. They are graceful in form and slightly hairy, 6 to 12 inches long, 2 to 3 inches wide, deeply divided as far as the central rib, so as to form usually two pairs of leaflets, placed opposite to one another, with a large terminal leaflet. The margins of the leaflets are cut into by rounded teeth. The flowers drop very quickly when picked. They are arranged at the ends of the stems in loose umbels. They blossom throughout the summer, being succeeded by narrow, long pods, containing blackish seeds. This plant is undoubtedly the true Celandine, having nothing in common with the Lesser Celandine except the color of its flowers.

**Cultivation:** Grow this plant in well-drained soil in sun or mottled shade. Seeds may be sown or they may be divided in the fall. These plants reseed themselves freely. The whole herb, collected in the wild state, from May to July, when just in flower is used either fresh or quickly dried between 90 and 100F. Likewise, the fresh juice. The plant has a narcotic smell, lost when it is dried, and a bitter taste. The root should be unearthed in late summer or fall and dried in the sun or shade.

**History:** *Chelidon* is the Greek word for “swallow” and celandine probably derives its name from the fact that it begins to burgeon when the swallows arrive in spring and dies back when they leave again in autumn. Legend has it that swallows use a sprig of this weed, or its juice, to restore the sight of their young when these cannot see. According to superstition during the Middle Ages, if celandine is placed on the head of a seriously ill
person, the one who will die will begin crying,
while the one who will live will laugh. In folk
medicine, greater celandine has often been
viewed as a cure-all. It has also been used for
thousands of years to treat and clear the
eyesight, especially for the removal of
cataracts. There is an old belief in southern
Europe that celandine sings when a sick man is
about to die and weeps when he is going to
live. Queen Elizabeth I, whose teeth were
euphemistically described as “black pearls,”
was said to have once avoided a painful tooth
extraction by dropping the juice of celandine
into the hollow of a decaying tooth and
removing the tooth with her fingers. The
alchemists of the 16th century may have
referred to it as coelidonum or “gift from
heaven.” They consumed it in the form of a
mother tincture in white wine to ward off
jaundice. According to John Gerard,
celandine simmered in good honey, strained
and then applied to the eyes, cures blindness
and clears the cornea blocked by a cataract.
Clusius, a Dutch physician and herbalist,
maintained that the celandine sap could treat
excessive bile and yellowish-green
suppurations of the skin and the mucous
membranes. Dr. Mességué advised bathing the
hands and feet, harmless but effective, against
allergies, arthritis, sores, eczema, hypertension,
sciatica and conditions of the prostate. The
Russian research Denissenko reveals that it
may have cured various cancers.

**Constituents:** Greater celadine contains
isoquinoline alkaloids, including
allocryptopine, berberine, chelidonine,
chelerythine, coptisine, protopine, and
sparteine. Several of these alkaloids are
analgesic. Chelidonine is antispasmodic and
also lowers blood pressure. Also chelidonic
acid, essential oil, saponin, yellow latex with
carotenoid latex.

**Properties:** anti-spasmodic, cholagogue,
anodyne, alterative, diaphoretic, narcotic,
purgative, diuretic

**Medicinal Uses:** Greater celandine acts as a
mild sedative, relaxing the muscles of the
bronchial tubes, intestines, and other organs. In
both Western and Chinese herbal traditions, it
has been used to treat bronchitis, whooping
cough and asthma. The herb’s antispasmodic
effect also extends to the gallbladder, where it
helps to improve bile flow. This would partly
account for its use in treating jaundice,
gallstones, and gallbladder pain, as well as its
longstanding reputation as a detoxifying herb.
The tincture or infusion of the leaf will
stimulate and clean the liver. In one study,
researchers gave tablets containing chelidonine
to 60 people with symptoms of gallstones for
six weeks. Doctors reported a significant
reduction in symptoms. Greater celandine’s
sedative action does not, however, extend to the
uterus—it causes the muscles of this organ to
contract. Externally the salve has been used to
clear eczema, scrofula and herpes. The juice
applied to the eyes will clear the vision, and
applied to wounds will promote healing. The
fresh juice is dabbed two or three times a day
on warts, ringworm and corns. (Do not allow it
to touch other parts of the skin.) The fresh
juice mixed with milk is used to help remove
cataracts and the white spots that form on the
cornea. An ointment of the roots and leaves
boiled in oil or lard is an excellent treatment for
hemorrhoids. Only the dried herb should be
taken internally. The fluid extract is made with
the fresh herb. Ukain, a derivate of celandine,
is used for solid tumors such as breast, lung,
and colon, as opposed to leukemia and
myeloma, It can be beneficial even when used
in combination with Taxol plus supporting the
liver function.

**Mrs Murphy’s Celandine Salve**
½ lb celandine, fresh
¾ lb vegetable oil
Heat together on low in a crockpot for several
hours or overnight. Strain and add 1 oz
beeswax and ½ dr almond oil. Melt together
again. Cool and jar.

**TCM:**
Celandine treats conditions of a Yang deficient or Yin excess, cold, stagnant and damp nature with fatigue, introversion and cold limbs and constipation foremost.

ENERGETICS: bitter, cool
MERIDIANS/ORGANS AFFECTED: liver, colon

APPLICATIONS:
Put 2 teaspoonfuls of the herb or 1 teaspoonful of the root in a cup or cold water, bring to the boil and then remove from the heat. Let stand for 10 minutes. Take one cup twice a day. It is dangerous to exceed this dose.

Tincture: Take 1-2ml of the tincture three times a day.

In gall-bladder disease, Greater celandine combines well with burberry and dandelion.
Liver tea: 10 grams celandine, 10 grams chicory root, 15 grams milk thistle seed, 15 grams dandelion herb and root, 10 grams fumitory herb, 10 grams boldo leaves. Prepare the mixture and store in a dry place. Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 1 teaspoon of the tea blend, let it steep and then strain. Drink 2 to 3 cups daily.

Cough Drops: 20 grams tincture of greater celandine, 20 grams tincture of round-leaved sundew, 10 drops essential oil of thyme. Combine these ingredients in a jar and shake it thoroughly. For irritating and spasmodic cough, a course of treatment is 10 drops ingested several times daily accompanied by drinking a tea of burnet saxifrage.

Corn Remover: 6 cups water, 1 tsp potassium chloride, 4 oz fresh celandine, chopped, 1 cup glycerin. Put the water in a medium saucepan and add the potassium chloride. Heat and stir until the potassium chloride dissolves. Remove from the heat, add the celandine and let stand for 2 hours. Return the pan to the heat and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Using a sieve or wire strainer, strain the liquid into a medium bowl. Discard the plant material. Return the liquid to the pan and let it simmer until it is reduced to 1 ½ cups. Add the glycerin and continue simmering until the liquid is reduced to 2 cups. Strain the liquid, place it in a bottle and store it in cool place. Apply it to corns twice a day. This same formula can be used daily as a hair rinse for dandruff.

HOMEOPATHIC USES: Homeopaths use Chelidonium majus for jaundice with pain under the right scapula. Icy coldness of fingertips and alternating diarrhea and constipation are indications, as is a loose cough with right-sided chest pain.

Ritual Uses: Gender: hot; Planet: sun; Element: fire; Basic Powers: Protection, Escapes. Celandine brings joy and cures depression. Wear it to escape entrapments and as a protective herb. Wear next to the skin and replace every three days. Aggressive people, it was said, became calmer, their hatred and quarreling lessened, when they wore amulets of celandine root. Carrying the weed on one’s person, together with the heart of a mole, is supposed to enable the wearer to vanquish his or her enemies and also to win lawsuits.

Other Uses: In the past the juice was used to dye wool, fabrics and even leather. When impregnated with alum and cream of tartar, wool takes on a bright orange hue. And Celandine juice tints wall paint beautifully.

Dye: 1 of celandine
1 lb wool
1/3 cup alum
1 Tbsp cream of tartar
4 gal water

Mordant the wool in the alum and cream of tartar. Meanwhile, boil the celandine in water for an hour. Strain out the plant material, and add enough water to make 4 gallons. Enter the wet, premordanted wool and slowly raise to simmer. Hold it there for about ¾ hour. Cool, and rinse until the water runs clear. Dry in the sun to bring out the straw-gold color. Be sure to open out the wool or turn it occasionally. Color: straw gold

Toxicity: Stem juice is highly irritating, allergenic and may cause paralysis.
References:
The Energetics of Western Herbs, Peter Holmes, 1989; ISBN: 0-9623477-6-0

Resources:
Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com
Crimson Sage, http://www.crimson-sage.com

HERBALPEDIA™ is brought to you by The Herb Growing & Marketing Network, PO Box 245, Silver Spring, PA 17575-0245; 717-393-3295; FAX: 717-393-9261; email: herbworld@aol.com URL: http://www.herbalpedia.com Editor: Maureen Rogers. Copyright 2014. All rights reserved. Material herein is derived from journals, textbooks, etc. THGMN cannot be held responsible for the validity of the information contained in any reference noted herein, for the misuse of information or any adverse effects by use of any stated material presented.