**JOE-PYE WEED**

*Eupatorium purpureum*
[yoo-puh-TOR-ee-um pur-PUR-ee-um]

**Family:** Compositae

**Names:** gravel root, green-stemmed joe-pye weed, hemp weed, motherwort, niggerweed, queen of the meadow, quillwort, jopi, jopi-root, purple boneset, purple thoroughwort, thoroughwort tall boneset; purple thorough weed; kidney root; trumpet weed; dolloff, bridewort, lady of the meadow

**Description:** Hardy herbaceous perennial that can grow from 3-9 feet. The leaves can be up to a foot long and are lance-shaped and green, in whorls. When leaves are bruised they emit a faint scent of apple peel or vanilla (depending on whose reference you read). The stem is aromatic, thick, round, hollow and purple, with vertical line markings toward the base. The root is thick and purplish-brown, with cream flesh and smaller roots. Its taste is bitter and astringent with an odor that resembles old hay. The flowers are tubes of rose-pink (occasionally white) overlapping petals that appear in clusters in late summer. The seed is brown, narrow, pointed, tufted and 1/8 inch long. It’s native to the Eastern North American woodlands, from southern New Hampshire to Georgia and Oklahoma.

**Cultivation:** Hardy to zone 3 or 4. Germination in 2-3 weeks, better if stratified. Prefers partial shade or sun in any rich, alkaline soil. Thrives on lots of water and stand a poorly drained soil. Must be irrigated often in the west and even in the wet summer areas if there is an extended drought. Soil temperature 65-70F. Sow fresh seed in autumn and divide roots in spring or autumn. Thin or transplant to 3 feet apart. Not suitable for indoor cultivation. Pick leaves anytime. Dig up roots in autumn, remove small side roots. Crown can be divided and set out and will produce substantial roots in 2-3 years. Collect seed heads when petals have dropped. Dry leaves, roots and seed heads. Dries quickly and should be turned the first couple of days. The leaf and flower are about 70% water. The flowers are somewhat fine so you need to put something under the screens to catch the flowers that have sifted through. The harvesting is done with pruning shears. The first year you might get a small late harvest but starting in year 2 you will be at full production. Yields are about 1,000 pounds of dry leaf and flower per acre.

**Constituents:** essential oil includes flavonoid (euparin), oleoresin (eupurpurin), produced by pouring tincture into cold water; tannins, bitter principle; sesquiterpene; lactones.

**Actions:** diuretic, nervine, stimulant, astringent, tonic and relaxant; antirheumatic; promotes menstruation, lithotropic, carminative

**Energetics:** bitter, pungent, neutral
Meridians/Organs affected: kidney, bladder, stomach, liver

History: Eupatorium refers to Mithridates Eupator, King of Pontus, Greece, who was said to have used one of his local species of this genus in a 1st Century medicine. Native Americans taught the settlers about its medicinal uses. They also carried a piece for luck in gambling. Joe Pye was an Indian who was famous for curing typhoid and another story says that the herb was named after a 19th century white promoter of a boneset remedy for typhoid and other fevers. Another story is that one Indian tribe called typhoid fever jopi fever so that the herb to cure it was jopi weed. Its height and attractiveness gave it the name "queen of the meadow". The name Bridewort came from the days when it was used for strewing houses at wedding festivals and because of its resemblance to the white plumes of feathers once worn by brides. A very old recipe says that if the flowers are infused in liquor of any kind this results in a pleasant taste, and it also recommends adding them to mead. Native Americans used the plant to induce sweating and break a fever. Pioneers used it for the same purpose in treating typhus fever, as well as to induce vomiting and for bladder ailments.

Medicinal Use: Dried flowering tops and leaves were used as a tonic for biliosness and as a laxative but this is now felt by some to be too toxic. Specifically to help remove stones in the bladder caused by excess uric acid—which gives one of its names of gravel root. Infusion may be used as an astringent tonic and stimulant. The solvent is water. Leaves of Joe Pye stimulate circulation and sweating and reduce inflammation. The dried root has been used to tone the entire reproductive tract, helping with pelvic inflammatory disease, gonorrhea, menstrual cramps, and also prostate and urinary infections; gout and rheumatism. It is toning to the mucous membranes and cleans sediments that have settled on their surfaces. A concentrated root extract called "eupuriun" was sold by the Eclectic doctors.

As a nervine, it is said to influence the entire sympathetic nervous system. In cases of a depressed state of typhoid fever, its combination with Capsicum and Juniper is very effective. Combines well with parsley piert, pellitory of the wall or hydrangea for kidney stones or gravel.

As an internal remedy, the root has been administered to increase urine flow, for urinary infections and female disorders, and as a tonic and a stimulant.

Remedies: for acute and chronic gonorrhea, aching of the back and weakness in the pelvic area--1.5 oz gravel root, 1 oz. squaw vine, 1 oz goldenseal. Simmer in 2.5 pints of water for 20 minutes. Strain, and administer 3 tablespoons, 3 times daily.

For feverish colds and influenza--take 5 drops of leaf/flower tincture as required and can be added to phlegm-reducing mixtures with herbs such as elderflower and ground ivy.

For menstrual pain or to sip during labor use decoction of the root.

For urinary disorders such as cystitis and gravel or discharges caused by infection take 2-3 ml, three times a day of root tincture. Use with white dead nettle for prostate problems.

Homeopathic: tincture of the root--Albuminuria, Calculi, Cystitis, Diabetes, Dropsy, Enuresis, Gravel, Headache, Homesickness, Hysteria, Impotence, Indigestion, Intermittent fever, Renal colic, Rheumatism, Sciatica, Strangury, Throat (sore), Urine (retention of), Vomiting

Toxicity: While not poisonous, overdoses cause nausea, pains in the stomach and bowels, increased heart action and a run-down feeling.

Household Use: Crush unripe and ripe seed heads and boil for a pink-red dye. Culpeper said that the dried leaves would drive away wasps and flies if burned in a room.

Dye: 1 pot Joe Pye weed
1/3 cup alum
1 Tbsp cream of tartar
4 gal water
1 lb wool

For the dye, use the whole plant (don’t have to include roots). Cover them with water and boil for about 1 hour. Then strain out the plant. Dissolve the cream of tartar and then put the alum in the dye. Put the wool into another pot and cover it with water. Bring that pot to simmer and then transfer the wool to the dye pot with no change in temperature. Hold it at simmer for about ¾ hour. Cool and rinse until the water runs clear. Color: soft yellow...with chrome: dull yellow and with copper: tan.

Recipes:
Meadowsweet Wine
7 pints flower heads
3 lb sugar
7 pints water
½ pint white grape concentrate
1 tsp grape tannin
juice of 2 lemons
yeast and nutrient

Add boiling water to the flowers and stir in the lemon juice, grape concentrate and sugar. Allow to cool to room temperature before adding the tannin, yeast and nutrient. Cover well and leave to ferment for 8-10 days in a warm place, stirring daily. Strain into a fermenting jar and fit an air-lock. Rack for the first time when the wine clears and bottle a few months later. (Nature’s Wild Harvest)

References:
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Indian Herbalogy of North America, Alma R. Hutchens, Merco, 1973
Medicinal Herbs in the Garden, Field & Marketplace, Lee Sturdivant and Tim Blakley, Bootstrap, 1998
Nature’s Wild Harvest, Eric Soothill & Michael J. Thomas, Blondford, 1990
Tieraona’s Herbal, Tieraona Lowdog, 1985

Resources:
Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com
Crimson Sage, http://www.crimson-sage.com
Plants
Wood Violet Herb Farm, www.woodvioletherbfarm.com

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