

MOTHERWORT



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Leonurus cardiaca

[lee-on-or-uss kar-dee-AH-kuh]

(Chinese form: *L. sibiricus*; *L. heterophyllus*)

Family: Labiatae

Names: Lion's tail, Lion's ear, Lion's tart, throwwort, lion heart, motherwomb, heartwort; Agripaume, Agripaume cardiaque, Herbe battudo (French); Agripalma, Melissa salvatica (Italian); Aartgespan, Hartgespan (Dutch); yakumos (Japanese); ikmoch'o (Korean); Hjärtstillä, bonässla; äkta hjärtstillä (ssp. *cardiaca*), ullig hjärtstillä (ssp. *villosus*) (Swedish); Løvehale (Norwegian); Almindelig Hjertespannd (Danish); Nukula (Finnish); Echtes Herzgespann, Herzgespann, Echtes Lövenschwanz (German); Løvehale (Norwegian); Scerdecznik pospolity (Polish); Agripalma, marihuanilla (Spanish)

Description: an upright prickly bush with a height of up to 5 feet and a width of 2 feet. The flowers are pale pink to purple, very hairy, in whorls of 6 to 12, alternating up the stems with leaves. The leaves are dark green above, pale below, oak-shaped and deeply lobed into three, especially at the bottom. Prickly. Blooms in late-June to August.

Cultivation: A perennial to Zone 3. Germinates in 2-3 weeks. Space 2-3 feet apart. Soil temperature for germination 65-75F. Soil should be light, well drained and fairly poor with a pH of 7.7. Full sun. Easily self-sows once established. Plants can be put in by either hand or by transplanter. Space at 12-15 inches in the row with row spacing at 240-30 inches. Harvest the leaves and the entire flower stalk with clippers when the flowers are in full bloom, anywhere from late June into August, being sure to leave enough flower stalks for reseeding to occur. Chinese studies indicate that the active chemical components are at their highest concentrations when the plant is in bloom. Before flowering, the quantity of active components is much reduced. There is usually a small crop the first year and then two cuttings a year after that for several years. Yields of 1,200 to 2,500 pound per acre can be expected. Dries easily in 3-5 days, though it should be turned the first couple of days.

Constitutents: essential oil, alkaloids (stachydrine, leonurinine), glycosides (leonurine, leonuridin), flavonoids, diterpenes, caffeic acid, tannins, vitamin A.

History: the early Greeks gave motherwort to pregnant women suffering from anxiety. This use continued and gave the herb the name mother wort, or "mother's herb." Its other

prominent action is on the heart, giving it the species name *cardiaca* or the Greek *kardiaca*, or heart. *Leonurus* comes from the Greek *leon* for “lion” and *ouros* for “tail”, as the plant was thought to resemble the tail of a lion. There is an old tale about a town whose water source is a stream flowing through banks of motherwort. Many of the townspeople lived to be 130 years old and recall one who reportedly lived to 300 years. In Europe, motherwort first became known as a treatment for cattle diseases. Colonists introduced motherwort into North America and the 19th century Eclectics recommended it as a menstruation promoter and aid to expelling the afterbirth. They did not consider it a heart remedy at all. The Cherokees used the herb as a sedative for nervous afflictions. The Eclectics prescribed it as a tranquilizer. Today, Ukrainian healers recommend its use against arteriosclerosis, hypertension, epilepsy, hysteria, insomnia, diarrhea and gastritis, not to mention menstrual pain and difficult childbirth. In Russia, Motherwort is called “Putirnik Serdechny” which translates “Heart Herb.” In the Victorian Language of Flowers it symbolizes concealed love.

Properties: emmenagogue, astringent, carminative, cardiac tonic, diuretic, antispasmodic, antirheumatic

Energetics: bitter, spicy, slightly cold

Meridians/Organs affected: pericardium, liver

Medicinal: Motherwort is primarily an herb of the heart. Several species have sedative effects, decreasing muscle spasms and temporarily lowering blood pressure. Another of motherwort’s uses is to improve fertility and reduce anxiety associated with childbirth, postpartum depression, and menopause. If used in early labor it will ease labor pains and calms the nerves after childbirth. Take motherwort only once soon after giving birth as consistent use before the uterus has clamped down may cause bleeding to continue. Use one to two times a day in the weeks following birth for

easing tension and supporting a woman through the feelings that come with new mothering. Do not use during pregnancy. Motherwort helps bring on a delayed or suppressed menstrual flow, especially when someone is anxious and tense. Chinese women often use it combined with dong quai as a menstrual regulator. Avoid using for menstrual cramps when bleeding is heavy. It strengthens and relaxes the uterine muscles and eases uterine cramping. It also reduces fevers, and is especially suggested for illnesses associated with nervousness or delirium. Motherwort was formerly used to treat rheumatism and lung problems, like bronchitis and asthma. Motherwort may help an overactive thyroid but does not depress normal thyroid function. Tincture the leaves and flowers as soon as you pick them. If you prefer to dry them, lay the leaves and stalks onto screens. Motherwort tea has a very bitter taste

Dosage: 10-30 gms

For a possible tranquilizing, uterine stimulating, blood pressure-lowering infusion, use 1-2 teaspoons of dried herb per cup of boiling water. Steep 10 minutes. Drink up to 2 cups a day, a tablespoon at a time. Because of the very bitter taste, add sugar, honey, and lemon or mix it into an herbal beverage tea to improve flavor. In a tincture, take ½ to 1 teaspoon up to twice a day. Do not give to children under age 2.

REMEDIES:

Infusion of aerial parts: use as a tonic for menopausal syndrome, anxiety and heart weaknesses, or for menstrual pain. Add 2-3 cloves and drink during labor. Take after childbirth to help restore the uterus and reduce the risk of postpartum bleeding

Syrup of aerial parts: the infusion is traditionally made into a syrup to disguise the flavor. Use in similar ways to infusion

Tincture of aerial parts: use as the infusion. Prescribed with herbs such as hawthorn as a heart tonic.

Douche of aerial parts: Use the infusion or diluted tincture for vaginal infections and discharges

Decoction of Seeds: use for menstrual problems

Eyewash of seeds: use a weak decoction for conjunctivitis or sore or tired eyes

Premenstrual Support: support the hormonal changes that occur before menstruation begins. When taken over a period of time—two to six months—they assist in relieving nervous anxiety, mood swings, irritability, swollen and sore breasts, water retention and cramping.

3 parts chasteberries, 2 parts crampbark, 2 parts motherwort, 1 part oatstraw, 2 parts sarsaparilla root. Take 2-4 times per day from ovulation through bleeding. As a tincture, take 15-40 drops. To make tea, pour 1 cup of hot steaming water over 2-3 teaspoons of herbs and drink 2-4 cups a day.

General menopause tonic: 3 parts vitex berries, 2 parts motherwort, 2 parts fresh milk wild oat seed, 1 part Dong Quai root, 1 part wild yam root, 1 part false unicorn root, ¼ part licorice root. Take as a tincture, 25-50 drops, 2-3 times per day, 5-6 days a week. Can be used over several months.

Cool as a Cucumber Tea: 1 oz motherwort, 2 oz linden flower, 1 oz chamomile flower, 4 oz skullcap herb, 3 oz borage flowers, stems, and leaves, 2 oz marshmallow root, 2 oz hibiscus flower. Combine 1 oz of the mixture with 4 cups of boiling water in a teapot or container with a well-fitting lid. Let stand for fifteen minutes; then strain the tea and store it in a closed container. Allow to cool; drink at room temperature. During daytime hot flashes, drink 1 cup as often as needed. Or it can be sipped all day. Just be sure to drink the entire amount each day.

Conserve of Motherwort: strip the flowers from the stems allowing 2 lbs of sugar to 1 lb of flowers. Beat them together well, stirring the sugar in gradually, then pot and tie down well.

Syrup of Motherwort: Cut the flowering stems into small pieces and put them into an earthen pot and pour over them boiling water, allowing 1 gallon of water to every 3 pounds of the

stems. Cover closely and leave for 12 hours, then squeeze the herbs very carefully, heat the liquid and add a fresh lot of herbs; infuse again, covering closely, and continue to do so until the infusion is strong enough. To every quart of the infusion add 4 pounds of loaf sugar and boil to a syrup and when cool bottle.

Toxicity: Motherwort leaves occasionally produce skin dermatitis when touched. Because of the possible anticlotting effect those with clotting disorders should avoid it.

Ritual Uses: herb of Venus and Leo. Excellent for inclusion in the ritual cup. It is a strengthening herb, giving a person a sense of purpose, and joy in the completion of the work needed. It brings an attitude that all will succeed and allows for the growth of inner trust, knowing that all will work towards a good and positive conclusion. It is also used as an herb of protection and countermagicke.

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Resources:

Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com
plants, seed

Crimson Sage, <http://www.crimson-sage.com>
Plants

The Rosemary House,
www.therosemaryhouse.com tincture

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