



Chickweed

Stellaria media



Family Name: Caryophyllaceae

Common Name: Chickweed

Description: A common annual herb, often considered as a weed. It has sprawling succulent brittle stems and grows in dense low vibrant green mats. The otherwise smooth stalk has a single line of hairs. The green pointed but generally oval leaves grow in opposite pairs and the plant is studded with many small starry white flowers with five petals so deeply cleft that it looks like ten. The narrow sepals of the same length complete the star formation. The fruit are found on elongated drooping stalks and produce tiny yellow-orange seeds. Chickweed readily self sows and will grow through out the year. It prefers cool, shady and damp spots, and grows best during autumn and spring. Frost resistant and drought tender.

Parts Used: The fresh whole herb for salads, tinctures and infused oils.

Constituents: Saponins, coumarins, flavonoids, carboxyl acids and triterpenoids. Rich in vitamins, B complex (including B12), C (150-350 mg per 100gms), D and minerals including iron, copper, calcium, sodium, manganese, phosphorus, zinc, magnesium and silica.

Actions: Nutritive, antiscorbutic, refrigerant, antirheumatic, alterative, demulcent, anti-inflammatory. Externally it is antipruritic, vulnerary and emollient.

Indications: Chickweed is a highly nutritious mineral rich food source. The saponins increase permeability of mucous membranes increasing the absorption of nutrients.

Chickweed soothes the whole digestive tract and nourishes the glandular and lymphatic systems for thyroid problems, swollen glands and cysts.

Chickweed is used externally as a poultice, salve or oil for itches, wounds, ulcers, abscesses, pimples, boils and other skin eruptions or injury. May be used as an eyewash or poultice for conjunctivitis. Use hot chickweed baths or soaks for arthritis, rheumatism, stiff neck, sore back or itching.

Historically: Seeds have been found in Neolithic burial sites. Used as an ancient pot herb. Traditionally fed to domestic birds and fowl. Chickens, hogs and rabbits love its succulent foliage and seeds, but it is said that sheep and goats won't touch it. Chickweed elixir is said to bring peace of mind and raises consciousness, thereby allowing sound choices to be made. It stimulates libido and increases fertility.

References: Waikato Centre For Herbal Medicine Course Notes
Herbalpedia 2007

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For The Herb Federation of New Zealand's Herb Awareness Week 9th - 16th March 2008
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Only the young tender stems and leaves should be picked since the greens are at their best during this stage. Chickweed can be eaten raw in salads and sandwiches. Chopped it can be added to chicken and egg salads. A pinch of chickweed on a cold soup or salmon mousse makes an attractive garnish. First steamed it can also be used as a filling for omelettes or a stuffing for fish or fowl.

Strong Bones Cordial

3 parts fresh chickweed

3 parts nettle

3 parts plantain

2 parts yellow dock root

1 part raspberries, fresh or frozen

1 part dandelion leaves

apple cider vinegar

3 parts horsetail

3 parts wild oats

3 parts rosehips

2 parts red clover blossoms

1 part cherries, fresh or frozen

1 part fresh-sliced organic oranges

unsulphured blackstrap molasses

Place all the herbs and fruit into a wide mouthed jar. Cover with twice as much apple cider vinegar. Cover the top of the jar securely (shake daily for 2 – 4 weeks). Strain well, squeezing all liquid possible out of the herbs. Sweeten the cordial with 2 – 3 cups of unsulphured blackstrap molasses per litre of cordial. Take 2 – 3 tablespoons per day.

Chickweed Pesto

1 cup fresh chickweed

1 cup fresh basil

2 cloves garlic

½ cup olive oil

optional:

100g hard cheese

100g pine nuts

Put all the ingredients into your blender or food processor add more oil if necessary.

Mild Curried Chickweed

45ml olive oil

10ml mustard seed

4 cups chickweed

15ml tamari

5ml cumin seeds

5ml turmeric

15ml lemon juice

Heat the oil in a cast iron pan. Add seeds, stir and cook for two minutes. Stir in the turmeric and cook another minute. Turn off the heat. Add chopped chickweed, lemon juice and tamari. Stir well and serve immediately. Great with Basmati rice and yoghurt soup on a warm spring evening.

Cooked Chickweed Greens

Don't do it! Ignore all the recipes or suggestions to cook chickweed. It is at its buoyant best raw. Use chickweed like parsley: as a bland but salty herby garnish.

Chickweed Poultice

- Apply the fresh washed herb directly onto sores, closed eyes and wounds, or:
- Cook the greens and stalks, especially when using older plants or treating deeply. Cool before applying, or:
- Simmer chickweed in half water, half vinegar for about five minutes. Cool and apply.

Then:

- Cover chickweed with cotton towel or a thin layer of clay, and poultice for five minutes to three hours.
- Replace when the poultice feels hot to touch and oozes. (though most poultices are applied warm and removed when they are cool, chickweed poultices actually heat up as they draw out infection and heat.)

Relief often begins within a few hours of the initial application, with pain and swelling diminishing steadily as treatments continue. Poultices used on infections must be disposed of after use. Poultices used on clean wounds and unbroken skin can be reused several times if chickweed is in short supply.

References: Waikato Centre For Herbal Medicine Course Notes