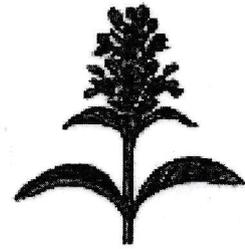




Selfheal

Prunella vulgaris



Family Name: Lamiaceae/Labiatae

Pharmaceutical Name: Spica Prunellae

Common names: Woundwort, Heal-all, Hookheal, Heart of the earth, Pimpernel, Sicklewort, Carpenters herb. Brunella was the Medieval Latin word for tonsillitis, which it was and is still used for.

Description: Selfheal is an evergreen perennial and has mid green ovate pointed leaves on square stems, (which are typical to this family), that creep along the ground, layering themselves as they go.

The lovely flower spikes rise up above the foliage with whorls of many small purple flowers, which if you magnify are hooded and lipped, surrounded by green calyces which are tinged maroon with fine white hairs. It grows prolifically in the garden and makes an efficient ground cover. Flowering from spring to autumn.

Propagation: Separate new plants which grow from stolons from the mother plant as it creeps along the ground, or from seed. It will grow in most situations but prefers not to dry out, so semi-shade is ideal.

Parts used: All aerial parts and medicinally generally during the flowering period.

Nutrition: - Vitamins A, B1, c, and K and trace minerals. A strong anti-oxidant.

Culinary: Use as an herb tea along with your favour herbs. For it's anti-oxidant properties -eat it-the leaves are a bit rough so chop them up very fine and mix them with other salad greens, use them in a sandwich.

Character: a bit sweet, bitter, astringent and pungent, cold, dry, relaxing, calming.

Medicinal use: As self heal is astringent then it can be used to 'tighten' tissue and aid with such conditions as diarrhoea, haemorrhoids (cream or ointment), – make sure you get this checked out medically first, to find what the cause is and use this as a cream to help heal tissues. As an eye wash for conjunctivitis or tired, itchy or strained eyes. As a gargle/ mouth wash for sore throats and mouth or gum infections/ inflammations. As a poultice or compress it can be used for clean wounds. We take this very useful herb for granted as a weed in the garden and it gets no honour by most people. Recently it has been 'discovered' to be one of nature's best anti-oxidants so why buy tablets when you can grow a plant that is both attractive and beneficial?

Home Remedies: - Dry the flower heads, grind in your coffee grinder and add other herbs to make your own anti-oxidant mix (see recipe overleaf).

Caution: Avoid using therapeutically when digestive deficiency is present.

Recommended Reading:

The Essential Herb Garden by Gilian Painter (published by Viking, ISBN 0-670-86473-0)
Seed packs are available from Kings Seeds, P O Box 283, Katikati. Tel 07 549 3408

Drying and Storing Herbs

In drying herbs their 'essence' needs to be maintained, ie colour, fragrance, taste, medicinal value.

1. pick the herb in the morning after the dew has dried. Do not wash (except for roots). If needed, hose the plant the night before.
2. Dry by hanging by the cut stem in small bunches or leaves and flowers can be spread out on a basket trays, (flowers not touching), in an airy place out of direct sun light. Roots should be slit in half length ways.
3. Store in brown paper bags when crisp
4. Generally, the herbs will retain their potency for 6-12 months, roots and bark for several years.

Teas or Infusions

A tea is where only a small amount of leaves and/or flowers are used to make a refreshing drink. An infusion is definitely a medicinal preparation, where a lot more flowers and/or leaves are used (30 grms to 1 litre)and left to steep for a much longer period, the longer left steeping (up to 8 hours) the stronger the constituents, therefore medicinal content of the drink.

Selfheal

A Decoction

A decoction is normally used to extract the medicinal constituents from the bark or roots of herbs. This method is not used on leaves and flowers as the heat will damage the properties of the herb. Decoctions are made by straining the infusion (made as above), heating very gently until steaming then holding it at that very low temperature until the water has evaporated to 1/4 to 1/2 the original volume. This is more potent, keeps longer and makes a bitter herb easier to take. 1 Tbsp vodka can be added for a longer life but store in the fridge.

Tincture Making at Home

A tincture is a preparation using herbs in alcohol (vodka is best but brandy can be used). Tinctures are potent, long lasting, fast acting medicines. Some plant constituents are better extracted in tinctures but others (especially vitamins and minerals) aren't. A tincture is best made from fresh herbs and the process is simple.

1. Gather plants, (Early morning after the dew has dried).
2. Chop roughly and pack a clean jar to the top with the plant material, pour on 100 proof vodka, or other spirit to cover.
3. Seal the jar and leave for six weeks, shaking it periodically. Top up the jar if a gap appears.
4. Dried roots, bark and tough leaves, (ie Rosemary) can be tinctured as above using 60 grms of plant per 300 mls spirit.
5. Individual plants require individual percentages of alcohol to best extract the chemical constituents of that plant, but the above is a good guide for home use.

Be sure to consult with a trained medical herbalist before self prescribing and dosing, as all herbs require different doses for varying durations of time.

Anti-oxidant Mix

Grind to a fine powder any combination of all or some of the following dried herbs, (they all have good anti-oxidant properties) adding extra of the herb or herbs that you want the most flavour from. Then use it as a condiment **after cooking** to flavour such dishes as omelettes, cheese on toast, salads. This is limited only by your imagination.

Blueberries	Kelp
Sage	Rosemary
Thyme	Self heal
Turmeric root	Ginkgo
Hawthorn	Rosehips
Liquorice root	Garlic
Grape seeds	Cayenne
Orange or mandarin peel	
Milk thistle seeds	