



Chamomile

Matricaria chamomilla

Chamomile – *Matricaria chamomilla*, previously known as *Matricaria recutita*, is the International Herb of the Year for 2025—it is one of the best-known herbs.

There are a number of different Chamomiles; the one we are focussing on here is German Chamomile, which grows as an annual, not to be confused with Roman Chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), which is a perennial and not the medicinal one. They are both members of the Daisy (Asteraceae) family. Chamomile, as with most annuals, is grown from seed. Simply prepare an area that is in full sun, good free draining soil and scatter your seed. Just wait for them to grow and start blooming, they are that easy! The more you pick the flowers, the more there will be. Do make sure to save some for seed for next year though.



(Image: Chamomile flower; Karina Hilterman)

Character of Chamomile is described as bitter, neutral, warm, and moist.

Constituents: Chamomile is a complex chemical cocktail; some of its constituents are volatile oils, glycosides, tannins, phenols, coumarins, plant acids, salicylates, polysaccharides and phytosterols. Minerals; calcium, iodine, magnesium, potassium, iron, manganese, zinc, Vitamins; A, C, niacin and riboflavin.

Therapeutic Actions: With actions of carminative, anti-spasmodic, mild sedative, anti-inflammatory, anti-septic, anti-catarrrhal, anti-allergic, digestive tonic, mild analgesic and vulnerary (wound healer). You can see that this is a very useful herb.

Using Chamomile: The flower is the part used, they look like a tiny daisy, a ring of white petals around a golden centre, they have a fragrance somewhat like a cross between freshly cut hay and apples and its name is derived from the Greek ground apple because of its scent. The Flowers have a strong action on the nervous system; they help to reduce the effects of stress, calm tension and to promote peaceful sleep. It can help relieve headaches brought on by stress or over concentration and Chamomile is one of the best remedies for nervous indigestion. Also, for stomach cramps, colic, colitis, ulcers, gastritis, diverticulitis, irritable bowel, diarrhoea or constipation and other similar conditions—a great gut herb!

As it is a mild analgesic, it can help relieve pain – especially if the pain is of neuralgic origin, or by damage to nerve function. Chamomile can slow rapid heartbeats caused by fear and tension. Useful also with nausea in pregnancy and travel sickness. This is one herb that is very safe for use with babies and small children, with a soothing gentle action; it is useful for such conditions as colic, teething, measles, asthma or croup (infusion or inhalation), colds, earache, diarrhoea, sore eyes, conjunctivitis, fevers and eczema. In Germany, France, and Spain, Chamomile is recognised of great value by many medical doctors and it is prescribed widely for treating babies and children.

Externally, it is also useful as an eyewash, for haemorrhoids (in a sitz bath, same for candida), for heat rash, ulceration and wound healing.

Preparation & Dosage: The simplest easy way to use Chamomile is to make an infusion (tea), using 2 teaspoons of dried flowers (or 2 Chamomile tea bags), pour over boiling water and place a saucer on top to retain the volatile oils. Leave 5 minutes, then drink, on its own, or sweeten with a little honey. This with some orange flowers is good a bedtime for insomnia.

As a digestive aid, on its own or with other herbs i.e. aniseed, dill, mint, orange peel or cinnamon after a meal.

For treating respiratory conditions, try a steam inhalation using ¼ cup of Chamomile Flowers to a litre of boiling water in a bowl, cover head and bowl with a towel and inhale the steam.

A strong decoction can be used in ointments for insect bites, eczema, anal or vulval irritations, and mouthwash for inflamed gums.

Tincture of Chamomile for adults use 2-5 mls 3 times daily

(Image: Chamomile ready to harvest; Karina Hilterman)

Essential Oil of Chamomile can also be used in creams, ointments, massage oils, lotions and inhalations, but for good quality oils it is very expensive, so if it looks like a bargain, odds are it is 'fragrant' oil, not essential oil. Fragrant oils are usually a synthetic fake.



Cautions: There are some cautions with using this as an essential oil, don't use in pregnancy, where as a herbal infusion of the flowers is OK.

As with all herbs and spices which have a calming effect, if Chamomile is used in excess, it can cause lethargy and debilitation.

Pollen: As the flowers contain a lot of pollen, in some people this can cause allergic reactions (especially if you are allergic to the daisy family) – but in most cases it aids people who suffer from allergies (somewhat of a paradox!)

History and mystery: Chamomile is native to Europe and Asia, and has been used as a healing remedy for thousands of years. Its first recorded use is by the Early Egyptians, who dedicated it to their Gods because of their belief in its curative powers.

Its use was wide spread by medieval times, apart from Chamomiles medical uses, it was also used as a strewing herb, for making garlands and chaplets for maidens.

Chamomile is considered to be of masculine gender, with its ruling planet being the Sun and element of Water.

Its powers include being a money attractant; some smart gamblers go to the extent of washing their hands in an infusion of the flowers! Use also as a sleep incense and to attract love and scattered around your property is said to bless and protect, also by clearing negative energies. Maybe keep some in a sachet in your pocket!

(Image: Chamomile flourishing in the beans; Karina Hilterman)

William Lawson said of Chamomile, “*It delights the mind and brings health to the body*”



And from 1606 from Ram's Little Dodoen “*To comfort the braine smel to chamomill, eate sage... wash measurably, sleep reasonably, delight to heare melody and singing*”—pretty good advice...

References: Carole Fisher & Gilian Painter, 1996, *Materia Medica of Western Herbs For The Southern Hemisphere*; Simon Mills & Kerry Bone, Principles and Practice of Phytotherapy; Helen Philbrick & Richard Gregg, Companion Plants (& How to Use Them); Scott Cunningham, 1997, *Cunningham's Encyclopaedia of Magical Herbs*

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Advisory Note: This text is given as a general guidance. If any adverse reactions occur or symptoms persist, please contact a qualified medical herbalist or medical doctor immediately