



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium (Linn)



- Family** Asteraceae
- Common names** Thousand weed, Soldiers wound wort, Bad man's plaything.
- Description** Aromatic perennial, far creeping stoloniferous herb; erect furrowed stem, 8-60cm high; white or pinkish flowers (early summer to autumn) and slightly hairy bipinnate leaves, 2-10cm long, divided into fine leaflets. Seeds freely.
- Habitat** Arable land, pasture, waste areas, roadsides, industrial areas
- Cultivation** Propagate by division spring or autumn. Grows in many soil types in a sunny position.
- Uses** The whole plant can be used, both fresh and dried including flowers. From ancient times this herb has been associated with healing of wounds and stemming of blood flow.
- Culinary:* Add a few leaves to salads. Made into a beer in Sweden.
- Cosmetic:* Facial tonic for oily skin. Used as a snuff.
- Garden:* Plant helps surrounding plants to resist disease. The fresh leaf can be finely chopped into a compost to speed decomposition
- Historical:* The name Achillea may stem from the battle of Troy when Achilles healed many of his warriors by using Yarrow to staunch blood flow. Considered by the Druids and in China the stems used to foretell the future assisted by 1Ching (a Tang Dynasty Buddhist Monk). Extensive use by Native American tribes e.g Blackfoot, Cherokee, Chippewa, Iroquois, Cree as a cold remedy.
- Medicinal** Breaking of fevers, colds, bleeding piles, cystitis, covering wounds. Chew leaves to aid toothache. Press fresh leaves and flower tops into cuts and scrapes. Fresh leaf alleviates toothache. Of use in hypertension and coronary thrombosis, dysentery and diarrhoea.

Combines with elderflowers and peppermint for colds and influenza. Stimulates gastric secretion.

Constituents Main medicinal constituents are the volatile oil of approximately 1.5% containing mainly camphor, sabinene and cineole. These constituents give the plant antimicrobial action. Yarrow contains sesquiterpene lactones including achillicin, and the bitter glycol-alkaloid called achillene. It also contains some flavonoids eg. rutin and luteolin and tannins (up to 4%) which contribute to its positive action on the cardiovascular system.

Dosage Infuse as a tea for digestive problems; cleanse the system; help regulate menstrual flow. Decoction for wounds.

Side effects Extended use of yarrow leaves may make skin sensitive to light. High doses may make urine dark brown. Large doses produce headaches and vertigo.

An old rhyme

Yarrow, Yarrow Long and Narrow
Tell unto me by tomorrow
Who my Husband is to be

References

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