



Apple

Malus domestica

Apples belong to the Rosaceae (rose) family and they originate from Europe and Asia. A deciduous tree, there are hundreds of different varieties of apples, giving fruit suited to eating or cooking, large growing trees and dwarf forms. They are probably one of the most well known of all fruits.

Cultivation: Apples grow best when given good rich soils and adequate water through summer when they are developing fruit. They can be grown in containers, but they must be kept well fertilised and watered during spring and summer to ensure good fruit production. Mulch around the base of the tree up to its tree line to keep grass from encroaching, which has an inhibiting effect on apples (and pears).

Companion Planting: Use wallflowers, garlic and chives to assist apples to grow and fruit better. Nasturtiums growing around apple trees are considered to deter woolly aphids, which can be quite a problem if allowed to become an infestation. The flowers look lovely as well, and the plants help keep weeds under control.

Apple trees are deciduous. Prune trees either in winter after leaf fall or after harvesting the fruit. The pruned branches are excellent cut and dried for use as kindling for winter fires.



(Image: Karina Hilterman)



(Image: Apple blossom - Koanga Institute)

Energetic Character: Unripe apple – cool, moist, sour and astringent. Ripe apple – moist and sweet.

Part Used: The fruit is the part used as both a food and a medicine.

Constituents: Vitamins A, Bs, C, E and K. Minerals: is particularly high in potassium; others include calcium, magnesium, iron, manganese, sodium, phosphorus, zinc, copper and fluoride. Also contains pectin, fruit acids and sugars.

Therapeutic Uses: Anti-inflammatory, nutritive, astringent, antidiarrhoeal, soothing and healing.

You know that old English proverb, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”? Well, science is proving it to be correct. The pectin in apples has been found to chelate (bind) excess cholesterol and bile salts thereby reducing blood cholesterol and reducing the risk of arteriosclerosis and gallstones, two very common health problems. Therefore, you can see why traditionally, the “old wives” served stewed apples with roast pork, a rich and not-so-easy-to-digest food.

“...their syrup is good cordial in fainting, palpitations and melancholy...” 1653 – Nicholas Culpepper (1616-1654), English herbalist.

Medicinal Uses: Unripe or green apples have a long history as a treatment for diarrhoea and ripe apples for constipation. Raw or ripe apples have a cleansing effect on the body and a cooling, soothing action and so they are very useful for inflammatory conditions such as indigestion, arthritis, gout, gastric ulceration and urinary system infections.

Stewed apple is a traditional food for invalids and well suited to nourish sick babies and children.

Apple tea is a refreshingly healing drink for colic and other digestive problems or for colds. Prepare this by using fresh raw apples with the skin on, finely chopped, and pour boiling water over to infuse.

“Smelle an old swete apple to recover strenghte” – Dr John Caius, Physician to Elizabeth I

Dosage: For apples, there is not generally considered a recommended daily dose, unless you want to remember that old adage *“an apple a day...”*. Ripe apples can be consumed as one likes, though keep in mind that this may not be wise for diabetics, as ripe apples have a high sugar content.

Green apples (unripe) are not recommended to be eaten unless you have diarrhoea; if you do, then consume until your bowel motions are more regular.

Culinary Uses: This herb has so many culinary uses: to eat straight as a refreshing and nourishing snack, dried, cooked, baked and included in cakes, desserts, and preserves. The pectin in apples assists jam to set and can be included in jams with fruits that require a setting agent, eg strawberry jam (pectin or ascorbic acid is often included in recipes for this action).

Hot Apple Juice: Instead of mulled wine, try heating apple juice with the same spices to make a wonderful warming, non-alcoholic drink. Apple cider can be used as an alternative. Mind you, when brought to boiling point, most of the alcohol has evaporated. Lambswool (a drink of sweet-spiced ale, or cider, and roasted apples) is a traditional drink from the Middle Ages, which was consumed on festive occasions. It is still drunk today.



(Image: Mayflower apple - Koanga Institute)

Other Uses: Use apple bark with alum and sulphate of iron for a mordant and a bright gold-coloured dye.

“Adam was but human - this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden.” - Mark Twain (1835-1910)

History & Mystery: As to be expected, there is a great deal of history and folklore about apples: For starters:

Ruling planet – Venus; Element – water; Folk names – tree of love, fruit of the gods (deities associated with this fruit include Venus, Dionysus, Olwen, Apollo, Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Diana, Zeus, Iduna), fruit of the underworld, silver branch; Gender – feminine; Associated powers – love, healing, garden magic, immortality.

A medieval festival to celebrate the twelfth night on January 5th involved wassailing (blessing) trees – literally toasting a drink to an apple tree to encourage it to bear abundant fruit in the coming season. The toast, of course, is usually apple cider or lambswool. It was an important drink also for St. Lamma's Day (1st August), All Hallows' Eve, these days more usually known as Halloween (31st October) and St. Catherine's Day (25th November). Apples were also symbolic in medieval St. Valentine's Day (February 14th) and St. Swithin's Day (15th July) where apple bobbing and eating were important. Apple wood was used for making magic wands and used in traditional rituals. Apparently unicorns love resting under apple trees.

Flower Essence of Apple Blossom is used to detox the mind of negative thoughts and thereby to help the body and mind restore itself to wellbeing. *“I help to unlock the true wellspring of health and bring harmony to life.”* This affirmation reflects both traditional, folklore and medicinal uses of apples as a great healer, as well as a wonderful nourishing food.

“Adam ate the apple, and our teeth still ache.” – Hungarian Proverb

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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.