

Plantain

Plantago major

P. lanceolata (narrowleaf plantain is used interchangeably)

Family *Plantaginaceae* – Plantain Family

Waybread, Waybroad, White Man's foot, White Man's footprint, Englishman's foot, Buckhorn, Cuckoo bread, Snakeweed, Devil's Shoestring, Common Plantain, Greater Plantain, Broad-Leaved Plantain, Rabbit Ears, Ribwort, Ripple Grass

Action Continuum: Nourishing, Tonifying, mildly Stimulating/Sedating

Character: taste is slightly sweet, salty, and bitter; energetics are mainly drying due to the astringency, but the mucilage is moistening, cool

Part(s) used: fresh or dried leaves; seeds. Gather leaves anytime. Dry as fast as possible as the leaves will discolor if dried improperly.

Primary Types of Preparations: fresh whole herb, fresh juice, fresh tincture, fresh vinegar, fresh poultice, fresh infused oil and salve, dried infusion, seeds cooked or soaked in cold water

Herbal Actions: respiratory tonic, expectorant, digestive and urinary relaxant, antispasmodic, demulcent, emollient, vulnerary, topical analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, astringent, styptic, diuretic, febrifuge, nervine

Primary Uses: Draws out toxic heat and is cooling to hot, inflamed tissues; it is drying when there is a flux or discharge. It is the primary herbal drawing agent. Plantain's demulcent action relaxes the lining of the gut, triggering a reflex that runs through the spinal nerves to areas related embryologically, like the lungs and the urinary system. In this way the mucilage works in a twofold manner: it reduces irritation and inflammation in the whole of the alimentary canal, reduces the sensitivity to gastric acid, prevents diarrhea and reduces the peristalsis; it also works via a reflex on the respiratory system, reducing tension and coughing and increasing the secretion of watery mucus. It acts as a gentle expectorant while also soothing inflamed and sore membranes. It has a subtle effect on the nerves, soothing inflamed nerves and can help bring back damaged nerve function.

Fresh Whole Herb

The fresh leaf can be secured over a wound as a bandage. Eaten as a salad green or potherb, the fiber in the leaves aids in elimination.

Fresh Juice

Use for mouth sores and bleeding gums and on skin wounds. Eases the pain of neuralgia.

Fresh Tincture (2-3ml or 1-30 drops a day)

Use for coughs, bronchitis, flu, pneumonia, allergy symptoms, diarrhea, gastritis, ulcers, mild colitis, cystitis, overactive bladder. Can be placed on a cotton ball or swished in the mouth for gum and tooth infections.

Fresh Poultice (as needed)

Draws out the venom of bee stings, insect bites, and snakebites. Soothes and heals poison ivy rash, boils, shingles. Pulls splinters, dirt, pus, and infection out of wounds. Especially useful for drawing infection from gums and teeth. Use on wounds to staunch blood flow. Aids the treatment of hemorrhoids. Relieves itching and prevents scarring. Reduces cysts (especially of the breasts), helps prevent cancer and is used in S. America to treat cancer. Eases pelvic pain.

Infusion (For dried, pour a cup of boiling water onto 2 teaspoons of dried herb; infuse for 10 minutes; drink 3 times a day. Can also make a fresh or dried infusion by pouring a pint of boiling water over an ounce of leaves.)

Use for coughs, bronchitis, flu, pneumonia, allergy symptoms, diarrhea, gastritis, ulcers, mild colitis, cystitis, overactive bladder.

Infused Oil or Salve

Aids the treatment of hemorrhoids and cuts. Use for erysipelas, poison ivy, eczema, psoriasis, erythema, burns, scalds, swollen glands, bruises, incisions, bites, and frostbite. Relieves itching and prevents scarring. Reduces cysts (especially of the breasts), helps prevent cancer and is used in S. America to treat cancer. Eases pelvic pain.

Seeds

The seeds can be eaten as a cereal grain, cooked with oatmeal or baked into bread. It is related to the *Plantago psyllium* that is raised commercially for its seeds which are marketed as a bulk laxative in products like Metamucil. A cup of boiling water poured over a teaspoon of seed and allowed to cool makes a mucilaginous liquid that can be drunk or applied as a poultice. Bulk laxative; soothes the bladder; protects the heart; helps with burning mouth, vaginal dryness, yeast infections, hot flashes, night sweats.

Primary Known Medicinal Constituents: leaves have the terpenes aucubin and catalpol (anticarcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, spasmolytic, hepatoprotective, neuroprotective, accelerates wound healing), ursolic acid (anti-inflammatory), oleanolic acid (antihyperlipidemic, tumor inhibitor, hepatoprotective), chlorogenic acid (immunostimulant), plantamajoside R (anti-inflammatory, antioxidant), acetoside R (antibacterial, antioxidant, inhibits lipid peroxidation, analgesic), polysaccharides (immunostimulant, increases production of tumor necrosis factor), polyholozide (gastroprotective), flavonoids (antioxidant, free radical scavengers, inhibit lip peroxidation, anti-inflammatory, antiallergic), sorbitol (soothing and cooling to the skin), mucilage, allantoin, phytosterols (lowers blood cholesterol), vitamins C and K, folic acid, carotenes, potassium, zinc, fiber; seeds have vitamin E, EFAs, tannins, protein, starch

Cautions: none

Body Systems Affected: digestive, respiratory, skin, urinary, circulatory, nervous, female reproductive

Plantago major L.

Plantago: from Latin *planta* meaning "foot print"

major: larger, greater

Status: Introduced - naturalized

Plant: erect, perennial, 6"-12" tall forb

Flower: white to green, 4-parted, 1/16" long; leaf-like, smooth, **widely oval bracts** below the flowers, 4 protruding stamens; inflorescence a 2"-12", dense, narrow, **blunt spike less than 1/3" thick**; blooms June-Aug.

Leaf: 3-veined, widely **elliptical to oval, stalk base green**

Root: very short, fibrous rhizome

Habitat: disturbed areas, lawns

Resources/References:

Weeds Heal, Isla Burgess

Opening Our Wild Hearts to the Healing Herbs, Gail Faith Edwards

Botany in a Day, Thomas J. Elpel

Herbal Constituents, Foundations of Phytochemistry, Lisa Ganora

A Modern Herbal, Margaret Grieve

The New Holistic Herbal, David Hoffman

Herbal Therapy & Supplements, A Scientific and Traditional Approach, Merrily Kuhn & David Winston

The Complete Medicinal Herbal, Penelope Ody

A City Herbal, Maida Silverman

Breast Cancer? Breast Health!, Susun Weed

New Menopausal Years, Susun Weed

Down There, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Susun Weed

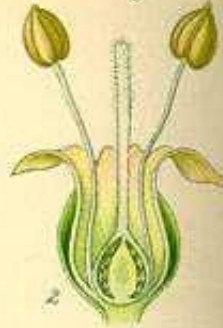
The Book of Herbal Wisdom, Matthew Wood

UW-Stevens Point Freckmann Herbarium <http://wisplants.uwsp.edu>



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Großer Wegerich.

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