

Weeds Can Be Good Medicine



Sometimes the answers to your health problems are growing in your own backyard

When people lose their health, they are usually willing to pay a very high price to recover it. But often, the remedies that could cure them are inexpensive and readily available, such as the weeds growing in their own backyard. What are weeds? According to the famous American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, weeds are the plants "whose virtues have not yet been discovered." So, maybe it's time to discover some of the virtues of these common, readily available herbs.

Native Americans and other indigenous peoples believed that the plants we need tend to grow nearby, so perhaps these difficult-to-eradicate plants are there because they're actually there to help us. Many of us return the favor by trying to poison them, dig them out or otherwise eradicate them, while paying for expensive medicines and therapies to try to resolve the very health problems weeds are there to help us solve.

In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*, we're going to celebrate the virtues of many of the plants most people call weeds. The list is not comprehensive but does cover most of the common useful weeds, and all of them are available as singles and/or in various formulas from Nature's Sunshine Products. Let's get started.

Alfalfa

Cultivated as feed for livestock, alfalfa often escapes cultivation, growing like a weed. The reason it's grown to feed livestock is because it is an extremely nutritious plant. Due to its deep root system (sometimes over 40 feet), alfalfa is high in vitamins and minerals, especially trace minerals. It contains vitamins A, D, E, B6 and K; folic acid, niacin, carotene, flavonoids, calcium, magnesium, chlorophyll, phosphorus, iron, potassium, trace minerals, mucilage, several digestive enzymes and other beneficial compounds.

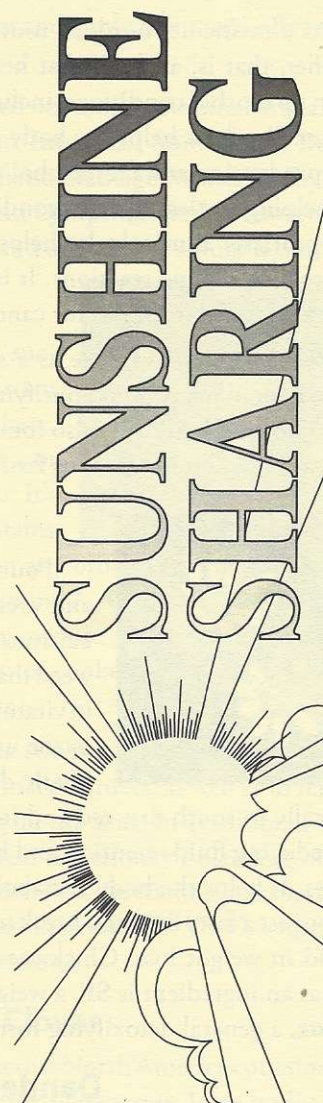
In Western herbalism, alfalfa is used to both cleanse and rebuild the blood, improve digestion, promote lactation and as an aid for the glandular system. It also contains phytoestrogens that can help protect the body from the harmful xenoestrogens that contribute to estrogen-dependent cancers. Alfalfa can be very helpful for healing bones and joints, due to its high mineral content. It can be purchased as a single and is also found in formulas like **Herbal Trace Minerals** and **Herbal CA** for supplying minerals to the body.

Burdock

Chances are pretty good that you've run into burdock if you've done any hiking. The plant grows in waste places (abandoned lots, fields, pastures and along roadsides) throughout the United States and produces seeds with small, hooked burrs that cling to anything that touches them, including socks, pants, shoelaces and animal fur. Its sticky seeds were the inspiration for the development of Velcro.

Burdock root is edible and was used as food by Native Americans and is still used in Oriental cuisine. Like many wild foods, we powder it and take it in capsules as a medicine instead of eating it.

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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Managing Editor/Writer: Steven Horne
Assistant Writer: Kenneth Hepworth
Editor: David Horne
Associate Editors: Carolyn Hughes, Leslie Lechner, Sharon Grimes

As a medicine, burdock root is primarily used as a blood purifier, that is, an herb that helps to detoxify the body and clean up morbid conditions, including skin eruptions, cysts and cancer. Burdock helps the body metabolize fats better, aiding bile production and fat metabolism in the liver. It is very good for helping to clear up skin conditions like acne, boils, eczema and psoriasis. Burdock also helps to stabilize mast cells, which can reduce allergic reactions. It is a typical ingredient in most Western herbal formulas for cancer.

Besides being available as a single herb, burdock is a key ingredient in many blood purifying formulas such as **BP-X** and **Red Clover Blend**. It is also found in the anti-cancer formula **E-Tea** (based on the famous Essiac Tea).



Chickweed

Found in moist places near woods and areas that have previously been cultivated, chickweed is a common weed that happens to be tasty and high in vitamins and minerals. It is soothing to the urinary system, promotes lymphatic drainage and has been applied topically to sooth dry, red and itchy skin. It is a mild diuretic for reducing fluid retention and helps to shrink swollen lymph nodes. It helps the body metabolize fats and can even help to decongest a fatty liver and break up fatty cysts. It is also believed to aid in weight loss. Chickweed is available as a single herb and as an ingredient in **SF**, a weight loss formula, and **All Cell Detox**, a general detoxifying formula.

Dandelion

Like many weeds, dandelion is not indigenous to North America, but was brought here by European settlers. It spread rapidly, following the migrations of the white man, so that it can now be found throughout North America.

Like other weeds we've discussed thus far, dandelions are both edible and medicinal. The leaves have been eaten as salad greens, but only the young leaves are palatable. The older leaves are too bitter to eat. The leaves are rich sources of lutein and zeaxanthin—two nutrients important for healthy eyesight—and carotinoids and vitamin K. The mature leaves are a great source of potassium and a nourishing diuretic for water retention.

Dandelion roots have been roasted and ground as a coffee substitute, but are more commonly used as medicine for improving digestive, liver and gallbladder function. Dandelion root improves the health of the GI tract and helps the liver detoxify from chemical exposure (such as the herbicides people use to kill dandelions).

Dandelion root is available as a single remedy and as an ingredient in many formulas. These include **Milk Thistle Combination** for protecting the liver, **VS-C** for herpes and other viral infections and **All Cell Detox**, a general detoxifying formula.

Kudzu

Introduced from Japan in the late 1800s, this highly invasive plant now covers over 7 million acres of the Southern U.S. and is nearly impossible to kill. Known as the "weed that ate the South," kudzu can be eaten as well as used as medicine. And, while some medicinal herbs have become endangered from overharvest, there's no risk of overharvesting kudzu.

Kudzu contains phytoestrogens and may be helpful for menopause. It has also been shown to aid alcoholics who are trying to quit drinking. Kudzu is also helpful for toning up leaky gut and relaxing stiff necks.

The phytoestrogens explain why kudzu is an ingredient in **Breast Assured** and **Breast Enhance**. It is also the key herb in **Kudzu/St. John's Wort**, a formula to help people stop drinking. Kudzu/St. John's Wort is also useful for toning up leaky gut.

Mallows and Marshmallow

Various species of mallows have been used as emergency food during times of famine and as soothing medicines for irritated tissues. Marshmallow (*Althea*) is the species most commonly used as medicine, but the common or garden mallow (*Malva*) can be used in a similar fashion. The leaves and green seed pods are edible and quite tasty, while the root is a valuable mucilaginous remedy.



The mucilage in mallows is soothing to the membranes of the digestive tract and lungs, making marshmallow one of the best remedies for inflammatory bowel disorders and dry, irritated coughs. Marshmallow is also soothing to the urinary membranes, easing painful and burning urination.

In addition to being available as a single herb, marshmallow is also an ingredient in many herbal formulas. It is a key herb in **Intestinal Soothe and Build**, used for soothing inflamed intestinal tissues, and in **Small Intestine Detox**, a formula for cleansing and soothing the small intestines. **Marshmallow and Fenugreek** is a blend used for dry, irritated coughs and respiratory congestion. Marshmallow is also an ingredient in both **Black Ointment** and **Golden Salve**, topical preparations for helping heal injuries and infections of the skin.

Milk Thistle and Blessed Thistle

Thistles can be very annoying weeds because they are prickly and hard to kill with herbicides. You usually have to dig them up by the roots to get rid of them. However, most species of thistles have edible stalks and roots, and two species of thistles, milk thistle and blessed thistle, are used medicinally.

Milk thistle is the most well-known because modern research demonstrated it has a hepatoprotective effect, making it useful in preventing liver damage from alcohol, poisonous mushrooms and chemicals. Specifically, milk thistle has also been used ef-

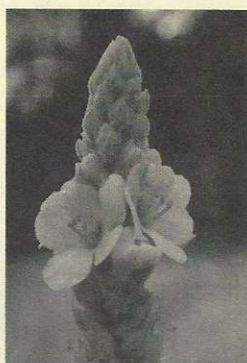
fectively as an antidote to the poison in deathcap mushrooms (*Amanita phalloides*). Animal studies found that milk thistle completely counteracted the poison if given within 10 minutes of poisoning. Milk thistle has also been shown to help counteract poisoning from medications like acetaminophen (i.e., Tylenol).

Milk thistle is available in a time release form and is also the key ingredient in **Milk Thistle Combination**, a blend that can be used for protecting the liver from chemicals, recovering from hangovers and even as an aid to healing the liver in hepatitis. Milk Thistle is also found in **Enviro-Detox**, a formula that aids liver detoxification.

Blessed thistle is also available as a single. It is used to aid the liver in balancing hormones and is an ingredient in the female balancing formulas **FCS II with Dong Quai** and **Female Comfort**.

Mullein

Often found in areas that man has disturbed, such as abandoned lots and the sides of railroads and roads, mullein is a biennial plant that starts as a ring of soft, velvety leaves close to the ground during the first year. In the second year, it sends up a tall spike topped with yellow flowers.



Mullein has affinity for the lungs and lymphatic tissue. It is one of the best remedies for easing congestion in the lymphatic system and hydrating the lungs to treat dry, hacking coughs. It is also healing in chronic lung diseases like asthma, COPD and emphysema. An oil made from the flowers is also used to treat earaches.

Mullein can be taken as a single herb for six to twelve months as a slow-acting restorative and tonic in serious lung problems. It's also an important ingredient in a couple of major formulas. Its lymphatic properties make it a key ingredient in **Lymphomax**, a formula for clearing lymphatic congestion, and its respiratory properties make it an important component of **ALJ**, an expectorant and decongestant blend.

Plantain



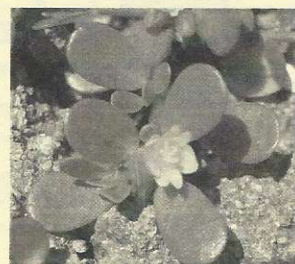
This common weed is found in lawns all over North America and, like the dandelion, was brought to this continent by the European settlers. Native people called it "white man's foot" because it followed white settlers wherever they went. So, it must be a valuable remedy that we really need.

Plantain is not only edible as a green vegetable, it is also one of nature's best first aid plants. Plantain leaves have been applied topically to aid the healing of insect bites and bee stings, cuts, scrapes and bruises, and skin problems like dermatitis, eczema, psoriasis and skin ulcerations. The best way to use the plant is

simply to crush the fresh leaves and apply them topically where they are needed.

Internally, plantain is used to soothe intestinal irritation, which is why it is included in **Intestinal Soothe and Build**. It also promotes better lymphatic drainage, which is why it is found in **Kidney Drainage** and **Lymphomax**. In addition, the seeds are known as psyllium and are used as a bulk laxative.

Purslane



This plant has rounded, succulent leaves and a reddish stem and grows just about everywhere, so chances are pretty good it can be found somewhere near you. It's a tasty wild vegetable and contains more omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy green. It is also high in antioxidants like vitamins A, C and E, and essential minerals like iron, magnesium, calcium and potassium. You can enjoy it in a salad, as a stir-fry, or cooked like spinach (they're related and have a similar taste).

As a medicine, purslane is cooling and soothing and has been used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, as well as to relieve sores and insect or snake bites on the skin. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is used to treat infections or bleeding of the genito-urinary tract as well as diarrhea. Its cooling and soothing properties make it an important ingredient in **VS-C**, a formula for herpes and other viral infections.

Red Clover

Many a meadow and field across North America contains red clover, which is pictured at the top of page one. It is a traditional blood purifier that is used to clear up skin conditions, promote better lymph flow, gently detoxify the body and even fight cancer. Red clover is often combined with burdock in traditional cancer formulas. It is especially helpful for estrogen dependent cancers like breast cancer because it contains phytoestrogens, which may help block the action of the stronger xenoestrogens.

As a blood purifier, red clover is available as a single and is also found in the blood purifying formulas **Red Clover Blend** and **Enviro-Detox**. Due to its action on the lymphatic system, it is also a key ingredient in **Lymphatic Drainage**.

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Additional Help and Information

For more information about useful weeds and herbal medicine (and any of the Nature's Sunshine formulas) contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products, 6th edition by Steven Horne and Kimberly Balas

A Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs by Steven Foster and James A. Duke
Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places by Steve Brill and Evelyn Dean

Edible and Medicinal Plants of the Rockies by Linda J. Kershaw

Discover the Medicines in Your Own Backyard

The best remedies aren't always the most expensive or exotic. Often they are the plants growing in your own backyard. So, in this issue of *Sunshine Sharing* we'll introduce you to fourteen plants, commonly thought of as weeds, that are actually valuable wild foods and medicines.



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Wild Lettuce

Lettuce has been used in salads for thousands of years, but it has a wild cousin that is plucked from yards and gardens everywhere as a weed—wild lettuce. Don't go picking this plant for your salad, as it is quite bitter due to its milky resinous sap, which happens to have a small amount of pain-relieving opiates. When this milky substance is collected and dried, it is called lactucarium. Unfortunately, gathering it is a difficult and tedious process and drying the whole leaf destroys the opiates.

However, the dried leaf still acts as a mild sedative that can help with pain and sleep, especially when combined with other herbs. This is why wild lettuce is included in the herbal aspirin formula, **APS II with White Willow Bark**.

Yarrow

Although it is grown in gardens and considered a wildflower, yarrow often makes its way into lawns where it's considered a weed. Yarrow isn't edible, but it is an extremely valuable medicinal plant. The leaves can be used to help stop both internal and external bleeding. The leaves are a wonderful remedy for excessive menstrual bleeding taken internally and a styptic to stop bleeding wounds applied topically. Yarrow flowers are a traditional remedy for fevers. They work best when taken as a hot tea (usually mixed with peppermint to improve the flavor).

Available as a single, yarrow is a key ingredient in **Menstrual Reg.**, a formula for heavy menstrual bleeding. It is also a good herb for improving lymph flow, so it's a part of **Lymph Gland Cleanse** and **Lymphomax**. Its ability to fight colds and flu is why it is also found in **CC-A**, a traditional formula for colds.