



Yarrow: The Wounded Healer's Herb



**A Plant Monograph
By Hannah Pearl Walcott**

Botanical Name: Achillea millefolium

Common Names: Staunchweed, Soldiers' Woundwort, Plumajillo (Spanish), Milfoil, Squirrel Tail (Ojibwe)

Family: Asteraceae, Compositae or Aster

Description of Plant: Yarrow can be distinguished by her dense, feathery, basal aromatic leaves and her white (sometimes pink or even red) umbelled flowers, blooming between May and August. Her erect stalks grow between 1 and 3 feet.

Habitat: Yarrow can grow in a number of climates, but she prefers sunny locations and light sandy soil. She is a perennial and can be found in meadows, pastures, high mountains and along roadsides. She is very common in North America and is native to parts of Asia and Europe.

Parts Used: Flowers and leaves, sometimes root

Collecting: Gather the stalks when they have recently flowered, between May and August.

Constituents: volatile oil (containing linalool, sabinene, allo-ocimene, azulene, eugenol, menthol, alpha-pineone, borneol, cineole, limonene, camphor, chamazulene), sesquiterpene lactones, achimillic acids A, B and C, alpha-methylene sesquiterpene lactones, beta-sitosterol, alpha-amyrin, stigmasterol, campesterol, cholesterol, beta-amyrin, taraxasterol, pseudotaraxasterol, flavonoids (apigenin, artemetin, luteolin, rutin), alkaloids (achineine, achilletin, betaine, choline, etc.), amino acids (lysine, alanine, histidine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid), fatty acids (linoleic, myristic, oleic, palmitic), other acids (salicylic, ascorbic, caffeic, folic, succinic)

Energetics: Cooling, drying

Actions: anodyne, antibacterial, anticoagulant, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, astringent, bitter, diaphoretic, diuretic, hemostatic, hypoglycemic, hypotensive, styptic

Medicinal Uses/Indications:

"She is a concentrator of energy. She assists other beings in the assimilation of minerals and the assimilation of strength. She makes the body feel strong and resilient to ailments, and dangers. She provides strength to those who are weak minded or weak in character" ~Sharol Tilgner, Herbal Medicine: From the Heart of the Earth.

Yarrow is known for its ability to stop blood flow when there is an excessive amount of bleeding, for instance- open wounds, nosebleeds (especially from allergies), fevers with hemorrhage, bleeding hemorrhoids, bleeding ulcers, urinary tract bleeding, and excessive menstrual bleeding.

Yarrow stimulates the immune system, aiding in colds, fevers, sore throats, and congestion. The flowers are particularly beneficial for breaking fevers, due to their strong diaphoretic effect. Yarrow has a toning and stimulating effect on the mucous membranes of the urinary tract, female reproductive tract, respiratory tract, and gastrointestinal tract.

Further uses include: nerve tonic, menstrual cycle regulation, aids in elimination via the skin and kidneys, varicose veins, gastroenteritis, dysentery, diarrhea, joint inflammation, and rheumatoid arthritis. Yarrow is a safe children's medicine, especially for colds and flus. It works well combined with chamomile for this purpose.

Spiritually and energetically, there is no better plant than yarrow to help one clarify their boundaries. It is a protective plant, providing psychic shielding from outside negative influences. It is good for sensitive people that can absorb other people's energies and become depleted. Yarrow helps to strengthen one's sense of self.

Preparations and Dosage: Hot infusion- diaphoretic effect. Cold infusion- diuretic effect with toning of gastric organs. Tincture- fresh plant 1:2, dry plant 1:5, 50% alcohol, 10-40 drops at a time in warm water. The dried root can be cut and chewed on for tooth.

Safety Contraindications: not recommended for extended use during pregnancy.

History/Folklore:

"The name yarrow is apparently derived from hieros which means sacred, because of the plant's association with ceremonial magic. Yarrow was thought to be richly endowed with spiritual properties, so it was preserved in temples and treated with special reference. It's healing effect upon the blood was seen as an ability to influence the life-blood, the essence or ego that is carried in the blood. It was used as an amulet, a charm to protect against negative energy and evil, of overcoming the forces of darkness and being a conductor of benevolent powers. It was also believed to be a love charm and to be ruled by the planet Venus. In China yarrow stocks were used to reawaken the spiritual forces of the superconscious mind during the I Ching." ~ Anne McIntyre, Flower Power



Yarrow gets its Latin name *Achillea* from the Greek warrior Achilles, who used yarrow to heal the wounds of his friends. *Millefolium* means “thousand-leaved”, pointing towards the dense feathery leaves of the yarrow plant. In Cherokee it is called *U Gi Da Li*, or “blood feather”, for its healing effect on the blood. Herbalist Matthew Wood calls her “The Master of Blood”.

Yarrow is often associated with Chiron, the centaur who taught Achilles about herbs and healing. He taught him of the many uses of yarrow. Both Achilles and Chiron were killed by being shot in the heel (this is where the Achilles tendon, located on the heel, gets its name). Yarrow is not only an ally for the wounded warrior, it is also an herb for the wounded healer. The wounded healer, like Chiron, teaches and heals others *only* through the healing of their own wounds and traumas.

Personal Observations:

If I were leaving planet earth tomorrow and had to choose one herb to travel with me, it would be yarrow. I have never known a stronger ally. As a highly empathetic person who tends to absorb the energy of others, yarrow has helped me establish healthy boundaries and distinguish between nourishing situations and depleting ones.

References:

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- ~Tilgner, Sharol. *Herbal Medicine: From the Heart of the Earth*. Creswell, OR: Wise Acres, 1999. Print.
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