

Aloe

Aloe vera
Lily family
Parts used – leaf



History & Folklore

References to aloe are found in Egyptian, Roman, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Algerian, Moroccan, Arabian, Indian and Christian history. Cleopatra credited aloe with her irresistible charm. It is said she massaged Aloe gel into her skin as part of her daily beauty routine. Marco Polo found the Chinese used aloe for stomach ailments and skin problems.

Aloe was used in ancient Israel to wash and prepare the dead for burial. Nicodemus bought a mixture of aloe and myrrh to the body of Jesus to prepare him for burial. The variety of aloe he must have used had a very strong and bitter smell and it is no wonder he neutralized the smell with a hundred pounds of myrrh. The Egyptians used aloe in embalming and for beautifying the skin. The juice of the aloe was included in many of their perfumes, lotions and powders.

Columbus, upon setting sail, said “All is well, aloe is on board.” The Indians in the Americas used aloe for burns, skin problems, stomach ulcers, intestinal disorders and many other ailments.

About Aloe Vera

There are perhaps 500 different species of the aloe plant. One thing they all have in common is that they can grow very large. In some parts of Africa aloes have been seen in excess of 25 feet with each leaf being over 10 feet in circumference.

The aloe is a wonderfully therapeutic plant. Aloe is the plant to reach for when it comes to any skin problems including burns, sunburn and minor skin irritations. Fresh aloe is the best to use. Take the leaf of the plant and crack it open and apply the gel to any cut, burn or scrap. The best juices come from plants that are 3 years or older. Aloe is an easy plant to grow and keep indoors so you will always have a fresh leaf for any skin problems.

If using commercially prepared aloe, be sure that the percentage of aloe in the product is at least 98 percent or more for it to be effective.

Although fresh aloe is the best to use, processed aloe that is freeze dried in a capsule is excellent for your herbal medicine cabinet as you can rehydrate them in a glass of water and apply to a burn or cut.



Safety considerations:

As Aloe stimulates uterine contractions, it should be avoided during pregnancy & during breast feeding since it may be purgative to the child.

Preparation: juice, infusion, ointment, cream, gel from the leaf

Herbal actions:

purgative, cholagogue, anti-inflammatory, alterative, tonic anthelmintic, vulnerary, mucilaginous, bitter, laxative, demulcent, emollient, emmenagogue, astringent.

Medicinal uses:

Burns & sunburn, cuts and wounds
Internal body cleanser, antihistamine
Helps constipation, heals ulcers and stomach lesions, expels pinworms
Use as underarm deodorant, hair conditioner



Pets: Aloe can be used as a topical application for wound dressing. Tiny amounts can be used internally for minor injuries of the digestive tract in dogs, such as eating bones they should not eat. Be careful though when using aloe internally with animals. The yellow latex inside the leaf is a very strong purgative and can bring on digestive distress and severe diarrhea. Be careful to only use the gel internally without the yellow latex. To be very safe with your pets use aloe only as an external application.

Cayenne

Capsicum annuum
Night Shade family
Parts used – fruit



History & Folklore

Cayenne or Capsicum derives its name from the Greek, 'to bite,' descriptive of the hot pungent properties of the fruits and seeds. Cayenne peppers are native to Central & South America and were being cultivated in these regions for thousands of years. The first time Cayenne pepper was introduced to the rest of the world was to Britain from India in 1548. Cayenne seeds were first brought to Europe following Columbus's voyage of 1492. Vasco de Gama is credited with introducing Capsicum into Africa and India.

The Indians used this pungent pod in cooking and for medicinal purposes. Samuel Thompson introduced capsicum into western herbal medicine. He wanted an herb that acted on the blood the way lobelia worked on the nerves and muscles. Cayenne has been used for hundreds of years to dull pain and increase circulation. Different cultures such as Chinese have used it topically for arthritis and muscle pain and orally as a remedy for circulatory & digestive problems.

About Cayenne

Cayenne and capsicum are words that are used as a generic terms for a broad range of hot chili peppers. The use of cayenne as a medicine was popularized by Samuel Thomson in the early 1800's. Cayenne and lobelia were the mainstays of Thomson's "healing system" he used in rural America in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Cayenne has benefits for both the old and the young but it is particularly useful for the old and those that are sick. When the body heat is low and vitality is depressed, cayenne will come with its fiery actions and stimulate the body to heal. Cayenne possesses an amazing ability to clear congestion, stimulate circulation and relieve tired and achy joints and muscles.

Cayenne stops pain immediately and bleeding from minor cuts and scrapes. Sprinkle the wound with cayenne powder (it will probably sting) and apply pressure until bleeding stops. Then wash it out, disinfect the wound and bandage it. The kitchen variety is OK. There are also cream preparations available.

Sprinkle some cayenne pepper in socks at night and you will not have cold feet in bed.

Cayenne Pepper is used to effectively relieve menstrual cramps. It is also used primarily to ease muscular tension and the pain of rheumatism.

Safety considerations: No side effects or drug interactions have been reported.

Preparation: infusion, tincture, powder & ointment

Herbal actions: stimulant, carminative, expectorant, rubefacient, antiseptic, hemostatic, circulatory tonic, antimicrobial

Medicinal uses:

Systemic stimulant

Normalizes blood pressure, strengthens cardio/vascular system, stops heart attacks, stops bleeding and hemorrhage.

fights colds & mucus

Topical ointment or cream has proved helpful in treating painful & itchy skin disorders including shingles, psoriasis & diabetic neuropathy, as well as the pain of arthritis.

Combines with:

As a gargle in laryngitis, it combines with Myrrh.



Emergency first aid use: Stops bleeding immediately. An extract or tincture applied under the tongue can stop a heart attack.