

Chapter 27

Making and Using Comfrey Medicine

Medicinal Gathering of Comfrey Leaves and Roots

For entertainment purposes only. See your medical practitioner about your health issues.

See subsection 'Comfrey Confused with Foxglove' in section 'Symphytum Genus Description'(Chapter 5, Volume 1). Foxglove is deadly when consumed. When not in flower, it looks somewhat like Comfrey. **Be sure you know what you are gathering.**

For more about digging Comfrey roots, see subsection 'Method of Digging Root Cuttings' in section 'Care of Comfrey Plant: Overview and How to Propagate' (Chapter 34).

"The green drug of Comfrey is proportionately much more active medicinally than the dried drug, and covers a greater therapeutic field."

-'National Association of Retail Druggists' with article 'The Cultivation of Medicinal Plants: Ideal Conditions for Comfrey, Stoneroot, Leptandra', Chicago, Illinois, Volume 23, November 9 1916.

"Gather Roots October to March. Gather leaves May to July.:"

All Comfrey varieties were used, however, the roots being gathered during the winter months (October to March).

The leaves, also employed, were gathered in June and July during and after inflorescence (group or cluster of flowers).

Compare this with the Comfrey rhizome (root) which in the earliest months of the year (January to March) contains from 0.6 to 0.8 percent of allantoin.

Analysed a couple of months later, it contains about 0.4 percent.

In July the amount is still further diminished, and when the plant is in full growth practically none is to be found in the rhizome but it is discoverable in the terminal buds, leaves and young shoots.

This important fact may be regarded as evidence that the plant withdraws allantoin from its storehouse in the rhizome and utilizes it for purposes of cell-proliferation."

-The Medicinal Uses of Comfrey by Dr. Charles MacAlister, M.D., F.R.C.P., 1935. (in 'Comfrey: Fodder, Food & Remedy')

"Allantoin is also present in Comfrey roots, and in the temperate climates when the plant goes dormant in winter, this is returned to the roots for storage until growth begins in the spring.

It is recommended that roots an inch (2.5 cm) in diameter or under should be used for the maximum medicinal value, for elderly roots which can be losing vigour may be less effective."

-Comfrey: The Herbal Healer by Henry Doubleday Research Association, 1975, 41 pages, page 21. (in 'Comfrey Report' book) (Temperate climates are those without extremes of temperature and rain/snow. It is between the tropics and the polar regions.)

"In the spring the plants go into early flower, and the leaves are smaller, with heavy flower stems.

This is good Comfrey. In some respects this is the best medicinal Comfrey because allantoin content is high in the flowering stage."

-Comfrey: Nature's Healing Herb & Health Food by Andrew Hughes. Japan: Sanyusha Publishing Co., Ltd, 1992, page 154.

"Harvest by cutting off leaves to dry for tea, as soon as flower buds appear; feed also to animals as green chop.

Roots are collected in fall, or so early in spring that it has no leaves, used medicinally; wash, slice, dry, powder in blender; store in sealed, dark jar."

-The Organic Method Primer: A Practical Explanation: The How and Why for the Beginner and the Experienced by Bargyla and Gylver Rateaver. San Diego, California: The Rateavers, 1993, page 163.

"Stability: This defines how long you can expect a gathered plant to stay reasonably strong or what characteristics it must retain to still have potency. The rule of thumb is that green herbs are good for a year, and roots and barks for two year.

Salves and oils, if they contain an antioxidant, are good for several years, and with few exceptions, tinctures last for years."

-Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West by Michael Moore. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Red Crane Books, 1993, page 24.

(This is stability of plants in general, not just Comfrey.)

"Fall is my favourite season. Our forests will soon be colourized, a brilliant last flash of colour before bedding down for the grey winter. This is the time to collect herbs with medicinal roots, like ginseng, valerian (German: baldrian), and Comfrey (beinwell). Research at the 'University of Quebec' has shown that medicinal roots reach their largest size and highest potency in October and November, well after the above ground parts have died down with the killing frosts.

Like their colourful arboreal (tree) cousins, herbs are programmed to withdraw nutrients from the leaves and stems and store