

Following are a few herbs you can easily grow in your own backyard or in containers to address some common health issues.



Nettles (*Urtica dioica*): Precautions: No known

precautions. Perennial that flowers and reaches up to 4 feet tall. Nettles spread vigorously and enjoy moist soil along the edge of a creek or pond. The plant is known as “stinging nettle” because of its hollow hairs (trichomes) on the leaves and stem that cause a stinging sensation upon contact. It has been eaten as a wild food plant, applied topically to the skin, and sipped as a herbal tea. Nettle fibers are of high quality and comparable to flax or hemp. Nettles must be steamed or boiled to disarm their stinging hairs. A great way to enjoy them is to eat the nettles and drink the water in

which they were steamed. Medicinal usage: allergies, joint pain and for its high mineral content of calcium, potassium, chlorophyll.



Cleavers (*Galium aparine*) & Chickweed (*Stellaria media*): Cleavers: Precautions: No known

precautions. This is a creeping and clinging ground dweller native to fields and woods. Prefers regular garden or woodland soil, sun or part sun. Cleavers is also called bedstraw after one of its historical uses as mattress stuffing. While the leaves and stems are eaten fresh on spring salads, dried cleavers are

commonly tinctured, steeped as tea, or used topically. Medicinal usage: assists the lymphatic system. Often combined with Chickweed to make a tea or infusion.



Chickweed: Precautions: No known precautions. Low growing perennial. Chickweed shows promising health benefits for managing obesity and encouraging weight loss. Two separate animal studies observing mice with a high-fat diet discovered that chickweed juice suppressed weight gain and that a chickweed extract reduced cholesterol levels and the size of fat cells in obese mice. Researchers attributed these effects to the extract’s ability to regulate fat metabolism. Researchers also discovered that chickweed has an anti-obesity effect on mice through the

suppression of appetite and increased heat in the body. The researchers attribute these effects to the saponin and flavonoid content in chickweed. It also reduced triglyceride (fat) and LDL cholesterol levels, providing an anti-obesity effect. In a lab-based study, Chickweed extracts inhibited the growth of numerous bacteria strains, including *E. coli*, *S. typhi*, *K. pneumonia*, *Staph. Aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Bacillus subtilis*. The researchers noted that chickweed was most effective against *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. This anti-bacterial activity is typically considered to be due to chickweed's alkaloid and phenolic content. Historical accounts and new research suggest that chickweed is beneficial for reducing inflammation. The fresh leaves can be eaten raw in salads, and dried chickweed herb is often infused as chickweed tea, macerated in vinegars, tinctured, or used in skin care creations.



Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*): **Precautions:** No known precautions. Safe for all ages. Lemon Balm is a member of the mint family and is a strong perennial growing up to 2 feet and contains a compound known as rosmarinic acid that appears to have antioxidant and antimicrobial properties. It is best known for its lemony scent and taste in teas and tinctures. Its calming effects are widely known and often a tea is recommended before bed or to calm nerves in stressful situations.



Comfrey (*Symphytum officinalis*): **Precautions:** Precautions for Comfrey include potential liver damage with regular use. Comfrey grows in clumps and spreads profusely. It is beautiful in containers or in landscapes. Leaves can grow up to 8" long and the purple bell flowers are an attraction in pollinator gardens. Comfrey is one of the most efficient and fastest skin healers known in the herbal world. You will find it in salves and infused into oils or applied directly to the skin for cuts, bruises, eczema and the like. Combined with Plantain, it is a powerful medicinal herb.



Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) & Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*): Precautions:

Passionflower has no known precautions.

Passionflower is a striking climbing vine attractively used on trellises for its unusual flowers and sweet passion fruit. It is cooling to the body, calming to the mind, and soothing to the spirit. It quells disquietude, calms the restless mind, and can promote natural relaxation. It also helps in coping

with stress. This plant is gentle yet profound. It can be administered as a soothing tea for children or the elderly. Passionflower is known for its use in conjunction with Valerian root as it is believed to dispel nightmares.



Precautions: Caution is advised with Valerian during the use of barbiturates, benzodiazepines, and other sedative drugs, as valerian has the potential to increase the effects of some sedatives. The plant grows up to 4 feet high and produces small clusters of white or pink flowers. The roots have a pungent odor, considered unpleasant by many and sometimes compared to the smell of sweaty socks. Cats are highly attracted to the scent in the same way that they

are catnip. The odor is also attractive to rats, as legend has it that the Pied Piper of Hamelin used Valerian to attract the rats when luring them out of town. Commonly infused as valerian tea, the roots can also be mixed into herbal tea blends or tinctured. Most commonly used for its strong sedative properties.



Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*): Precautions: Not for use in pregnancy. Feverfew is a perennial in the daisy family and grows to 2 feet tall. The herb is typically tinctured, steeped as feverfew tea, or employed topically. Its main purpose is to relieve mild or severe headache.



St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*): Precautions: Fair-skinned persons should avoid excessive exposure to sunlight during use. May decrease the blood levels of certain orally administered drugs. A herbaceous perennial that blossoms yellow and grows to 3 feet. Typical preparations include steeping as tea, oil infusion, and extract. St. John's Wort helps promote a healthy mood and emotional balance when taken as a tea or tincture. Also strengthens the urinary organs and builds healthy nerve tissue. When infused into oil, it assists with inflammation.



Sage (*Salvia officinalis*): Precautions: If consumption is used for anything other than a raw herb in cooking, then not for use in pregnancy or breastfeeding except under the supervision of a qualified healthcare practitioner. Sage leaves can be infused as tea, an extract, and used as a culinary spice. The low-growing evergreen shrub is used to flavor various proteins, soups, puddings, cheeses and vegetables. Its unmistakable peppery flavor makes it popular for use in stuffing and other hardier dishes. Medicinally, sage is an antibacterial and can be used as a gargle or mouthwash for infection or soreness in the mouth.



Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*): Precautions: No known precautions. A perennial growing to 2 feet, spreads widely. Peppermint is thought to be a natural hybrid between spearmint and water mint resulting in one of the most popular herbs enjoyed today. Peppermint has a long history of use in traditional healing practices as a tonic to support the daily functioning of the digestive tract and for its uplifting and refreshing aromatics.