

Arnica Montana

Arnica Montana is the well-known herb in European culture for its long, medicinal history and unique, healing properties. It grows wild in the mountains of Europe and North America. The cultivation of Arnica is really difficult, because it needs patience and careful conditions like a specific type of soil. The history of this superb herb, Arnica Montana, goes back centuries. The German scientist and writer, Goethe, claimed Arnica had saved his life. Known also as Leopard's Bane, it was discovered as a medicinal plant by Europeans in the 16th century. In the 1950s Swiss therapist Alfred Vogel wrote that, "Arnica may be found anywhere in Switzerland up to a height of 8,500 feet." Perhaps this is how it became known as Mountain Tobacco. That herb is protected by law in some parts of Europe. The main exporters of Arnica Montana are Portugal, Romania, Spain and south France. Germany is the biggest importer of Arnica, which is the most popular cure used in the holistic medicine there.

Arnica Montana is the aromatic perennial which belongs to the sunflower family (*Asteraceae*). It has the round, erect stem, which grows to 0.5 - 2 feet with two or three daisy-like, yellow flowers, 6-8 cm wide. The flowers have a slight aromatic smell. The stem and the leaves are hairy which can explain the genus name – from the Greek 'Arna' means "lamb". The leaves are bright green and soft. The upper leaves are toothed, while lower leaves have rounded tips. The seed-like fruit has a pappus of plumose, white or pale tan bristles. The entire plant has a strong and distinct pine-sage odor when the leaves of mature plants are rubbed or bruised. The medicinal use have the roots and the flower heads.

The active components of Arnica are sesquiterpene lactones, which are known to reduce inflammation and decrease pain. Other active ingredients are the essential oil thymol, flavonoids, inulin, carotenoids and tannins. How exactly work the substances which are consisted in Arnica Montana? They stimulate the activity of white blood cells and limit trapped fluids from bumped and bruised tissues, joints and muscles. They also eliminate micro-organisms and keep bacteria and pathogenic fungi from multiplying and stimulate blood circulation (they can raise blood pressure).

Arnica can be applied externally in the form of a cream, an ointment or a liniment. It is also the safest way of using it (but prolonged use may cause the irritation of the skin). Arnica Montana is the first remedy used for wide range of conditions. In general Arnica soothes tiredness of overstressed muscles. It's the effective cure, which brings the relief muscles, decrease pain and swelling. This special plant is used for bruises, sprains, muscle aches, wound healing, superficial phlebitis, rheumatic pain, inflammations from insect bites, swellings due to fractures, chilblains, ulcers, chapped lips, irritated nostrils. The Arnica compress applied to the injuries (including broken bones) is unbelievably effective. It is also applied before sport events to prevent muscle stiffness and reduce pain. One study performed in Norway showed that marathon runners who applied Arnica to their skin before the event experienced less pain and stiffness afterward. This herb is traditionally used as a topical treatment for burns, eczema, and acne. However, it should not be applied to an open wound, as it could cause painful irritation. Arnica is a relaxing addition to the bath, and has been shown to be particularly helpful for tired, aching feet.

Arnica Montana is seldom used internally, because it contains toxic substances, which affect negatively the stomach and can cause the side effects such as vomiting, weakness, increased heart rate and nervous disturbances. However, Arnica can be used as a mouth wash and gargle to fight inflammation of the mucus membranes (but it shouldn't be swallowed). Extremely diluted forms of this herb, which have no detectable amount of the plant in them are commonly used in homeopathy as tinctures. They are used to treat sore muscles, bruises, motion sickness, seizure disorders and other conditions caused by overexertion or trauma. Some homeopathic forms of Arnica are available in pills or injections.

In German there are some folk beliefs which concern Arnica. In Bavaria Arnica Montana used to be stuck in the edge of the field to protect the dwellers from the hailstorm. Arnica stuck out in the window had to protect from the strike of the lightning.

Green Tea

It's difficult to enumerate all green tea benefits. Ancient Chinese proverb says that it's better to be deprived of food for three days, than tea for one. A lot of green tea's healing properties has been discovered for 5000 years and the new research are still being done. Green tea is one of the most popular beverage on the world – second only to water! Green tea (made from leaves and buds of shrub *Camelia sinensis*) is native to China, but it's been associated with other Asian cultures like India or Japan. Ancient Chinese used green tea as the cure for everything: from headaches to depression. In traditional Chinese and Indian medicine, practitioners used green tea as a stimulant, diuretic (to help the excretion of urine), astringent (to control bleeding and help heal wounds), and to improve heart health. People often drink various kinds of tea, but they don't know the difference between them. Green tea is made by lightly steaming fresh tea leaves, while black tea is made from leaves that are dried and roasted and therefore lose a lot of their medicinal power. Green tea leaves are just steamed, which prevents polyphenols from being oxidized. There is also one kind of known tea – oolong tea which is made by half – fermentation of tea leaves.

Today tea tree (*Camelia sinensis*) is cultivated across the world in tropical and subtropical regions. The small tree or shrub is evergreen and is usually trimmed to below two metres (six feet) when is cultivated for its leaves. It has a strong taproot. The flowers are yellow-white, 2.5–4 cm in diameter, with 7 to 8 petals. They have short, white hairs on the underside. Older leaves are deeper green. Usually, the bud and the first two to three leaves are harvested for processing. This hand picking is repeated every one to two weeks.

Tea tree leaves contain the life-giving compounds – antioxidants called catechin polyphenols. There are the scientific proofs that these compounds inhibit the growth of cancer cells and even kill it without harming the healthy tissues. They also benefit in lowering LDL cholesterol (the harmful kind of cholesterol) level and they prevent the formation of blood clots (which can lead to the heart attack or the stroke). Catechin polyphenols neutralize the acting of free radicals in our organisms. Free radicals are substances in every single organism which can cause cells death, but they are activated just by the noxious, environmental factors like ultraviolet rays from the sun, radiation, cigarette smoke, and air pollution. Scientists have found the resemblance between drinking green tea and “French Paradox”. Despite consuming a diet rich in fat, the French have a lower per cent of heart disease than Americans. It turned out that the red wine (which the huge amount is consumed in France) contains polyphenol called resveratrol, which have the similar action to the action of catechin. In a 1997 study, researchers from the University of Kansas determined that catechin has much stronger and better action than the action of resveratrol. The results of this study explained why despite the really high per cent of smokers among Japanese men, there is the quite low rate of heart disease in Japan.

There is the long list of the health conditions, which can be healed by drinking of green tea. Drinking it prevents primarily atherosclerosis (particularly coronary artery disease), bad level of cholesterol and a lot of kinds of cancer. Cancer rates tend to be low in countries such as Japan where people regularly consume green tea. It protects against bladder cancer, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, colorectal cancer, esophageal cancer, pancreatic cancer, skin cancer and prostate cancer. Green tea may decrease the risk of cancer, inhibit growth of cancer cells or even reduce harmful effects of healing, e.g. a radiation. However, it's worth to say that the studies, which concern the impact of green tea on cancer, are still lasting and people's organisms response differently to the drinking of green tea and their reactions are still being explored. The certainty that drinking green will prevent cancer or will fight the disease, doesn't exist. Green tea prevents also rheumatoid arthritis, liver diseases, the death of brain cells – decreases chances of Alzheimer's or Parkinson's diseases. It also controls blood sugar in our body, so it's really helpful for diabetics. Some of the clinical researches suggest that green tea may improve metabolism and promote the weight loss.

We can find the consequences of this studies in pharmacies and stores, where on the shelves lies a wide line of products, containing green tea, which are supposed to make people thin. It can kill the bacteria that causes dental plaque, so it prevents the tooth decay. Chemicals found in green tea may also be effective in treating genital warts and preventing symptoms of colds and influenza. Green tea contains also caffeine and drinking it has the effect similar to the effect of drinking coffee – it helps fight the fatigue and improves our capabilities to work. However, people who drink excessive amounts of caffeine (including caffeine from green tea) for prolonged periods of time may experience irritability, insomnia, heart palpitations, and dizziness.

Sources:

www.liveandfeel.com

www.herbalsafety.utep.edu

www.kcweb.com

www.en.wikipedia.org

www.umm.edu

www.ageless.co.za

www.vitaminstuff.com

www.vitaminsdiary.com

www.greenteatruth.org

www.chinesefood.about.com