



Medicinal Uses of Trees, Shrubs and Flowers FACT SHEET

Today we enjoy trees, shrubs and flowers for their aesthetic beauty and perhaps their aromatic scent. It wasn't too very long ago that these very same plants were prized more for their medicinal value than they were for the visual beauty and fragrance they provided. For fun this factsheet takes us back to a time almost forgotten, when trees, shrubs and flowers had dual uses and knowing their medicinal properties was more important than how beautiful they may have looked around the house.

PIN OAK

Quercus palustris

Medicinal Use: Oaks are known to contain tannin: a compound found in its highest concentrations in the bark. Homemade tannin concoctions had many important uses in home remedies. Tannin preparations were used as an astringent, antiseptic and as a remedy for diarrhea, dysentery, ague (malarial type fever), bleeding, as a gargle for sore throat and as a fomentation, (warm compress for aches and pains). Who knew? We just thought it made a great native shade tree!

SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA

Magnolia virginiana

Medicinal Use: Boasting a heavenly fragrance, the native Sweetbay magnolia also had several uses as a home remedy. Years ago the stems and roots were used as a mild diaphoretic, i.e. (makes you sweat), a laxative, a tonic, (an old-time term for "mild stimulant"), and were also used in treating rheumatism, malaria and swelling. We simply love the vanilla scented pale white flowers in late spring!

ASIMINA TRILOBA

Pawpaw

Medicinal Use: Parts of the Pawpaw were used as an emetic (induces vomiting). The severely acidic bark was used as a bitter tonic. The leaves when prepared correctly were used to treat boils and skin ulcers. We really like the shiny leaves and cool looking fruit that are part of this small to medium sized tree that, although native to NJ, are difficult to find.

WITCH HAZEL

Hamamelis virginiana

Medicinal Use: Witch hazel is native to New Jersey and it was a traditional remedy of many native North American peoples. Witch hazel acts mostly on the veins and circulation and for this reason it has been used to decrease the inflammation and pain of bruises, sore muscles, bleeding, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, phlebitis, and insect bites. American Indians used poultices soaked in a decoction of bark

to treat tumors and inflammations, especially of the eye. We like it because Witch-hazel flowers in November when everything else in the garden is dormant.

SPICE BUSH

Lindera benzoin

Medicinal use: American Indians used Spicebush for treating coughs, cramps, hives, croup, measles and as an anodyne, (pain reliever). The Creek Indians bathed in a tea made from Spicebush and willow to relieve the pain and swelling of rheumatism. Other medicinal values include anthelmintic, or (intestinal worm killer), diaphoretic, emetic, and febrifuge (fever reducer). It is also an excellent insect repellent and Appalachian people still steep the leaves for a lemony tasting native tea. We simply like this native shrub for the pale yellow flowers in early spring and the bright red berries in fall.

PURPLE CONEFLOWER

Echinacea Purpurea

Medicinal use: The American Indians prescribed this plant for poisonous bites and stings, toothache, and enlarged glands such as those resulting from mumps. Echinacea is helpful to the lymphatic system and is a powerful immune system stimulant that has been resurrected by modern day herbalists to the point where Echinacea can be found "over the counter" in every pharmacy in America. It fights viral and bacterial infections and has anti-inflammatory properties. We really love the deep pink flower that arrives in late summer and Echinacea provides an important food source to the New Jersey State Bird, the Goldfinch.

JEWELWEED

Impatiens biflora

Medicinal use: American Indians used the juice of the jewelweed on many skin irritations; nettle stings, poison oak, poison-ivy, fresh mosquito bites, bee stings, minor burns, athlete's foot and eczema. We like this common annual because it flowers all summer long in the shady part of the garden.

MARIGOLD

Calendula officinalis

Medicinal Use: Marigold was chiefly used as a local remedy with uses as a stimulant and diaphoretic. It was used internally in the treatment of chronic ulcer, varicose veins, and jaundice. It has been asserted that a Marigold flower, rubbed on the affected skin, is an admirable remedy for the pain and swelling caused by the sting of a wasp or bee. A lotion made from the flowers is most useful for sprains and wounds, and water distilled from them is good for inflamed and sore eyes. The yellow dyes of various cheeses were also derived from marigold petals. We like Marigolds because they flower all summer long and they seem to repel insects and rabbits from the garden.

For more information on the medicinal benefits of trees, shrubs, and flowers on the web:

<http://www.herbs.org/>

<http://www.mskcc.org/mskcc/html/11571.cfm?search=thyme&tab=HC&x=13&y=17>

<http://cherokeevalley.com/herbs.html>

<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/comindxc.html>

<http://www.taoherbfarm.com/herbs/index.htm>