

# MARSHMALLOW

ALTHEA OFFICINALIS

## HISTORY/FOLKLORE

Indigenous to Asia minor and the greater part of Europe. Later naturalized on the east coast of the US in New England and New York – partial to salt marshes, damp meadows, by the sides of ditches, and by the sea and on the banks of tidal rivers.

The generic name Althea, is derived from the Greek, altho (to cure), from its healing properties. The name of the order, Malvaceae, is derived from the Greek malake (soft), from the special qualities of the Mallows in softening and healing.

Most of the Mallows have been used as food, and are mentioned by early classic writers. Mallow was a vegetable dish among the Romans and was considered a delicacy. In many other parts of the world it was used during times of famine.

Dioscorides extols it as a remedy, and in ancient days it was not only valued as a medicine, but was used, especially the Musk Mallow, to decorate the graves of friends.

Uses for Marshmallow have been documented for over 2,000 years.

## PICTURE



## SPECIFICS

**Family:** Malvaceae

**Parts Used:**

Root (On a 2 to 4 y/o plant),  
Leaves, and flower.

**Other Common Names:**

Mallards, Mauls, Malve, Sweet  
Weed, Schloss Tea, Mortification  
Root

## ACTIONS

**Emollient**  
**Protective**  
**Nutritive**  
**Demulcent**  
**Anti-inflammatory**  
**Anti-Irritant**  
**Alterative**  
**Antitussive**  
**Vulnerary**  
**Diuretic**  
**Moistening**  
**Soothing**

*Marshmallow supplies an abundance of vegetable mucilage and easily assimilated calcium making it a powerful anti-inflammatory and anti-irritant for the gastrointestinal tract.*

# COMMON NAME

SCIENTIFIC NAME

PLANT USES



## EARS, EYES, NOSE, & THROAT

- Inflammation of the eyes (as a decoction/wash)
- Gargle for sore throat (as a strong decoction)
- Inflammation of the mouth or pharynx
- Softens, and breaks up hard tissues and old scars

*“A person wishing to clear his vision should look for dew on the mallow. He should smear his eyes and eyelids with this dew, which he will have found in the morning or at night, when the night is clear, pure, and calm. He should then sleep for awhile.” – Hildegard von Bingen 12th century*

## CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS

**Starch**  
**Mucilage**  
**Pectin**  
**Sugars**  
**Asparagin**  
**Flavonoids**  
**Tannins**  
**Scopoletin**  
**Salt**  
**Phenolic acids**  
**Acidic polysaccharides**

- Planetary alignment Venus  
(Culpepper)

## INTEGUMENTARY SYSTEM (SKIN)

- Bruises
- Sprains
- Inflammation (Topical/Poultice)
- Mortification (Topical/Poultice - mixed with slippery elm and applied hot/warm)
- Boils, Abscesses, Ulcers, Old Wounds
- Blood Poisoning/Gangrene/Septic Wounds (topical)
- Eczema and Psoriasis (Topical Wash)
- Varicose Veins and Varicose Ulcers
- Scalds, burns, and sun burns
- Mature or Dry complexion
- Allergies
- Insect bites/Bee or Wasp Sting (Bruise leaves topically over bite)
- Dandruff (As a rinse made with a heavy decoction of the root)

## GROWING/HARVESTING TIPS

**Root (On a two to three-year-old plant) – Also the Leaves and occasionally the Flowers.**

**Root is collected early in the spring or fall. The leaves are picked in August, when the flowers are just coming into bloom. They should be stripped off singly and gathered only on a fine day, in the morning, after the dew has been dried off by the sun.**

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## PLANT USES CONTINUED



## MENTAL HEALTH

- *"If melancholy, brought forth by various fevers, makes a person's brain ail, one should crush mallow and twice as much sage in a mortar, and sprinkle it with olive oil. He should put this on his head, from the forehead, over the top, and to the back of the head, and tie it with a cloth. Repeat for three days, and for these three days refresh it at night with additional oil, or vinegar"* - Hildegard von Bingen 12th century

## NERVOUS SYSTEM

- **Nothing to Report**

# MARSHMALLOW

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## PLANT USES CONTINUED



## RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

- Any irritation to the upper respiratory tract
- *"Boiled in wine or milk, Marshmallow will relieve diseases of the chest, constituting a popular remedy for coughs, bronchitis, Whooping-cough, etc."* – Grievés
- Catarrh/Congestion of the respiratory organs
- Dry cough
- Triggering reflex mechanisms that travel through the spinal nerves, its demulcent action
- is valuable for all lung ailments, respiratory catarrh, and coughs. – James Green, Herbalist
- Bronchitis (including chronic)
- Asthma
- Emphysema
- Pneumonia

## CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

- High blood pressure with water retention

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PLANT USES CONTINUED

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

- **Nothing to Report**

IMMUNE/LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

- Septic conditions of moderate severity



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## PLANT USES CONTINUED



## ENDOCRINE SYSTEM (HORMONES)

- **Nothing to Report**

## DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

- Any irritation to the alimentary canal
- Dysentery (recommended to use the powdered root boiled in milk – traditional)
- Stomach ulcers
- Duodenal ulcers
- Peptic ulcers
- Gastric ulcers
- Hiatus hernia
- Slow digestion
- Diarrhea
- Crohn's Disease
- Colitis
- Acidic stomach
- GERD
- Low digestive enzyme production (leaves) with gastric acidity (leaves and roots)
- Constipation
- Hemorrhoids (external)
- Colic pains
- Enteritis

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## PLANT USES CONTINUED



## RENAL SYSTEM (URINARY)

- Any irritation to the urinary tract
- Painful complaints of the urinary organs
- Hemorrhage from the urinary organs
- Inflammation of the kidney's and bladder
- Cystitis
- Kidney stones and gravel
- Painful, scanty urination
- Strangury
- Hematuria
- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
- Renal (Kidney) irritation
- Strangury (pain in the urethra)

## REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

- Gonorrhoea
- The juice of the leaves drunk in wine, or a decoction of root is said to help women to a speedy and easy delivery – Culpepper 1826

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## PLANT USES CONTINUED



## MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

- Any ache in the muscles or sinew
- Inflammation or irritation in the joints
- Arthritis
- Stiff/dry joints with cracking

## SPECIFIC DISEASES/STATES/INFECTIONS/VIRUSES/BACTERIUM

- Individuals who are dried out and over heated
- Individuals who are giving up smoking
- Helps regulate water and drive moisture into tissues
- Individuals going through Chemotherapy (drink as a cold extraction, up to ½ gallon daily)
- Thirst with copious urination or no thirst with systemic dryness



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PLANT USES CONTINUED



## COMBINATIONS

- **Pectoral Tea:** Mixture of thinly cut marshmallow root 8 parts, peeled licorice root 3 parts, orris root 1 part, colt's foot leaves 4 parts, mullein flowers and star anise each 2 parts. – National Dispensatory 1879
- **Pectoral Tea 2:** Equal parts of the flowers of mallow, marshmallow, mouse-ear, colt's foot, red poppy, violet, and mullein. Although composed of seven flowers, it is known in France as quatre-fleurs. – National Dispensatory 1879
- With Comfrey and American Cranesbill for peptic ulcers
- With White Horehound, Licorice Root, and Coltsfoot for pulmonary disease
- With White Horehound and/or Lobelia for coughs
- With parsley and hydrangea root as a tea for kidney stones and gravel
- With St. John's Wort and Calendula as a poultice or salve for soothing and healing skin inflammation and ulcers.
- With Red Raspberry Leave as a soothing wash to soothe inflamed eyes.
- With slipper elm for burns, scalds, sunburn, and as an ointment
- With honey and garlic for sore throat or mouth sores

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## PHARMACY



### MAX DAILY DOSE:

- 3 to 6 ml of 1:5 Tincture (Root)
- 3 to 6 ml of 1:2 Liquid Extract (Leaf)

### MAX WEEKLY DOSE:

- 20 to 40ml of 1:5 Tincture (Root)
- 20 to 40 of 1:2 Liquid Extract (Leaf)

## APPLICATIONS

### INFUSION

- For an infusion of the leaf, pour boiling water onto 1 to 2 teaspoons of the dried leaf and let infuse for 10 minutes. Drink 1 cup, three times daily.

### DECOCTION

- The decoction can be made by adding 5 pints of water to  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb of dried root, boiling down to 3 pint and straining: it should not be made too thick and viscid.
- Cold Decoction: Half to 1 teaspoon shredded root or powder to each cup of cold water. Stand overnight. Dose, half to 1 cup. Also used externally as a douche for inflamed eyes.

### TINCTURE

- 1:5 @ 25% Dose is 5 to 15ml dail (d.)
- 1:5 @ 25% 1 to 4ml three times daily (tid.)

### LIQUID EXTRACT

- 1:1 @ 25%. Dose is 2 to 5ml (d)

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## PHARMACY CONTINUED



### POWDERED/DRIED

- Average dose, 2-5 grams dried root three times daily. For best results plant should not be boiled

### SYRUP

- Syrup of Marshmallow is made by macerating one part of the cut root with twenty parts of cold distilled water for two hours, then straining through muslin without pressure, and dissolving in fifteen parts of the liquid twenty-four parts of sugar. It is of a yellowish color and has a mild agreeable odor. – The National Dispensatory 1879
- Syrup is the best form for young children and infants. – Grieves

### MISC

- Marshmallow Water (Grieves) Soak one ounces of marshmallow roots in a little cold water for half an hour; peel off the bark or skin, cut up the roots into small shavings, and put them into a jug to stand for a couple of hours. The decoction must be drunk tepid and may be sweetened with honey or sugar-candy, and flavored with orange-flower water, or with orange-juice. Marshmallow water may be used with good effect in all cases of inveterate coughs and catarrhs.
- For Gravel (Grieves) Put the flower and plant (all but the root) of Marsh mallows in a jug, pour boiling water, cover with a cloth, let it stand three hours to make strong. If used for gravel or irritation of the kidney, take ½ pint as a tea daily for four days, then stop a few days, then go on again. A teaspoon of gin may be added when there is no tendency to inflammation.
- The leaves and/or root are used as a fomentation for treating all forms of swelling, pain, abscesses, and festering sores.
- Cosmetically: Can be applied in lotions and creams for blemishes or sore skin, and in bath or facial steams.
- The Root, boiled in a broth with parsley or fennel roots, do help to open the body, and are very convenient in hot agues, or other distempers of the body – Culpepper 1826
- Apply the boiled leaves warm to the belly. Easeth the pains and torments of the belly coming thereby, and are therefore used in all clysters conducing to those purposes – Culpepper 1826
- The decoction of the seed of any of the common mallows made in milk or wine, doth marvelously help excoriation, the phthisic, pleurisy, and other diseases of the chest and lungs, that proceed of hot causes, if it be continued taking for some time together – Culpepper 1826

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## PHARMACY



## PHARMACOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- The results of an in vitro study suggest that the adhesive effects of certain plant-derived polysaccharides to mucous membranes may account, in part, for the therapeutic effects of mucilage-containing plants in treating irritated buccal membranes. Polysaccharides from marshmallow root demonstrated moderate bio-adhesion to epithelial tissue.
- Cold macerate of marshmallow root inhibited esophageal muco-ciliary transport in vitro.
- In an experimental model, oral administration of an extract of marshmallow root or the polysaccharide fraction demonstrated significant antitussive activity, depressing the cough resulting from both laryngopharyngeal and tracheobronchial stimulation. This study provides indirect evidence that a soothing action on the upper gastrointestinal mucosa causes reflex soothing of the respiratory tract, leading to bronchodilation and reduced tendency to cough.
- Extracts of marshmallow root demonstrated potential anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory effects in vitro, but lack of anti-inflammatory activity was observed after oral administration of marshmallow root in carrageenan-induced rat paw edema. The in vivo anti-inflammatory effect of an ointment containing both marshmallow root extract and dexamethasone was superior to that of the individual ingredients.
- In Germany, the Commission E supports using marshmallow root and leaf to treat irritation of the oral and pharyngeal mucosa and associated dry cough and marshmallow root tea to treat mild inflammation of the gastric mucosa.
- ESCOP recommends marshmallow root for treating dry cough and irritations of the oral, pharyngeal, or gastric mucosa.

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PHARMACY



## SAFETY CONCERNS/CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Not to be used in states with profuse catarrh or congestion of mucous membranes in respiratory conditions since its mucilage serves to exaggerate the effect of mucosal discharge (Empirical).
- The absorption of oral drugs taken simultaneously may be delayed due to its mucilaginous coating effect (Speculative only). It is best to take 2 to 4 hours away from prescription medications due to potential absorption issues.

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## REFERENCES: