

YELLOWROOT

a BotanoLogos Monograph

COMMON NAME: Yellowroot

FAMILY: Ranunculaceae (Buttercup)

BOTANICAL NAME:

Xanthorhiza simplicissima

PART USED: Root/stem

ACTIONS: Digestive bitter, hepatic, antiseptic, antifungal, astringent

ENERGETICS: Cold/cool, Bitter

BOTANY: Yellowroot is a woody perennial, one to two feet tall, with compound leaves composed of deeply-cleft, serrated leaflets on each stalk. The brown outer bark of the main stem easily peels away to reveal the bright-yellow inner bark. The yellow color is an indication of the berberine (an alkaloid) content of the plant.

Just below the point where the leaves emerge from the central woody stem you'll find a spray of small star shaped greenish brown flowers. The flowers darken to a deep brownish-magenta color as the season progresses and begin to bloom just as the leaves unfurl in late March or early April. The roots are woody and fibrous with an acrid smell and the same dark color just below the outer bark.

Look for yellowroot in dense thickets along streams and ponds. Endemic to the Southern Appalachians, it is now found in many eastern woodlands.

USES: With actions similar, but much milder, than goldenseal, *Hydrastis canadensis*, yellowroot is a reliable bitter tonic that improves digestion, relieves gas, bloating, and indigestion. It may also relieve chronic constipation by stimulating secretions in the gastrointestinal tract. Yellowroot is a specific remedy for treating chronic stomach ulcers.

Topically, a decoction is used as a wash to clean wounds, and as a gargle and mouthwash for sore throats, thrush (fungal infections in the mouth), and bleeding gums, and in a neti pot for sinus infections. Use a yellowroot salve for bedsores, persistent ulcers, fungal infections, and general wound healing.



Notes from Patricia

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INDICATIONS:

- Poor digestion with bloating, belching or gas
- Gastric ulcers (*H. pylori*)
- Skin infections
- Sore throat, thrush and mouth ulcers (gargle)
- Sinus infections (neti pot)
- Persistent ulcers
- Fungal infections

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Contraindicated for internal use in pregnancy.

YELLOW ROOT PREPARATIONS:

Tincture: Fresh root, 1-part herb to 2 parts menstruum, or dry root, 1-part herb to 5 parts menstruum, using 60% alcohol.

Decoction: ½ teaspoon root, fresh or dry, per cup of water. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Salve: Make a salve using infused herbal oil made with fresh or dry yellowroot.

NOTE: Yellowroot is extremely acrid and bitter so be prepared when using it internally. The flavor itself may cause nausea. Consider taking tincture in a very small amount of water followed by something that tastes good. Combine decoction with other sweet herbs like licorice or add honey.

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