

PARTRIDGEBERRY

a BotanoLogos Monograph

COMMON NAME: Partridgeberry

BOTANICAL NAME: *Mitchella repens*

FAMILY: Rubiaceae (Madder)

OTHER NAMES: Squawvine, checkerberry

DESCRIPTION: A small, perennial evergreen vine with rounded, opposite leaves that have a shiny, leathery appearance. Each leaf is divided neatly in half by a white line. The entire plant is less than 3 inches high and grows in large creeping masses, often almost entirely obscured by leaf humus. Pairs of tiny, white flowers with a subtle fragrance appear in May and June. In late summer, a flavorless, mealy red berry appears.

HABITAT: Partridgeberry grows along the ground in the deep woodland shade. Look for it around the base of hemlock and rhododendron trees or on gradual slopes in diverse forest settings. This small herb is often partially hidden beneath a thick layer of leaf mulch.

KEY ACTIONS: Uterine tonic, astringent

PART USED: Aerial parts (everything above ground)

TRADITIONAL USES: Among American Indians, partridgeberry was a traditional remedy for a wide range of female reproductive system problems, including menstrual cramps, delayed or irregular menses, heavy menstrual flow, labor difficulties, and infertility. Infusions and poultices were used to soothe painful, inflamed nipples, hemorrhoids, and wounds.

The entire plant was used in an herbal steam to relieve rheumatism.

Berries were decocted in milk and used to relieve diarrhea and dysentery. Berries were also used as food though they are flavorless.



Notes from Patricia

BotanoLogos School of Herbal Studies

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Partridgeberry was a common home remedy for women's reproductive problems during much of the 19th and 20th centuries.[\[1\]](#)

CURRENT USE: Partridgeberry is still an essential gynecological remedy in modern herbal practice.

INTERNAL USE: A reliable tonic for deficiency and weakness with symptoms such as infertility, lack of menses, menstrual pain, threatened miscarriage, and as a labor tonic. Partridgeberry will reduce excessively heavy menstrual flows and may relieve persistent vaginal discharge (leucorrhea). Use Partridgeberry in formulas with other blood building and adaptogenic herbs.

COMBINATIONS: Partridgeberry is for women with overall deficiency symptoms such as fatigue, cold extremities, pale tongue, no appetite, insomnia, scanty or no menstrual period. Tonic formulas might also include nettles (*Urtica dioica*), raspberry leaf (*Rubus spp.*), damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), dang quai (*Angelica sinensis*), he shou wu (*Polygonatum multiflorum*), white peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*), and chasteberry (*Vitex agnus castus*).

HARVESTING: Only harvest wild partridgeberry from robust stands in areas where it is abundant. This plant is currently on the United Plant Savers' "To Watch" list of species at risk.

Cut the vines above the second set of leaves closest to the ground, being careful not to dislodge the roots in spring and early summer. Because this is a tiny plant, many are needed to make a significant amount of medicine. Process fresh herb or dry for a week to ten days on a screen. There may not be a substantial difference in the weight of dry and fresh herb.



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PARTRIDGEBERRY PREPARATIONS:

Tincture: Fresh plant - 1:2. Dried plant: 1:5. Menstruum - 70% alcohol. To be honest, there is not much difference between the fresh and dried herb, and I tend to tincture all partridgeberry at a ratio of 1:5.

Decoction: Use two teaspoons fresh or dry herb, finely chopped, for each cup of water. Cover and decoct for at least 20 minutes. Strain.

DOSAGES: Partridgeberry is a tonic herb that requires three to six months of daily use for best results.

Tincture: Take 2 to 3 ml three times a day.

Decoction: Drink 1 cup three times a day.

[1] Crellin, John K. and Jane Philpott (1990) 412-3

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