

Black Walnut

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The black walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*) is native to eastern North America where it grows from Florida to New Brunswick and west as far as Kansas and eastern South Dakota. It is a short trunked deciduous tree with a large crown of branches that can grow as tall as 100-130 feet when mature. Black walnut was originally a forest tree that was common on hillsides and in moist valleys but few wild specimens are left. When the pioneers began settling the west, they would clear the land and often leave the black walnut trees on the edge of their fields and around their homes.

The walnut tree that originated in the Middle East and northern India, commonly referred to as English walnut (*Juglans regia*), has nearly identical properties to the black walnut tree native to North America. Both black and English walnut trees are valued most commercially for their decorative, fine-grain wood and nut meats. There are also similar historical medicinal uses for the leaves, inner bark and green husks. The genus name for walnut came from the "golden age" of Greek mythology when "men lived upon acorns and the gods lived upon walnuts," hence the Latin name "juglans" which translates to "Jupiter's nuts." The Doctrine of Signatures attributes therapeutic properties of the walnut

to the brain due to walnut meats having a similarity to the two hemispheres of the human brain.

Modern day herbalists use black walnut hulls and leaves primarily as a vermifuge, an agent that rids the body of parasites. This was also how walnut leaves and husks were used medicinally in Europe with the addition of employing an infusion (tea) of the leaves or tincture of the green hulls for a variety of skin complaints and infectious diseases including athlete's foot, psoriasis, diphtheria, herpes, malarial parasites and even syphilis. Dr. John R. Christopher used black walnut externally and internally for all skin ailments and called it his miracle worker. He had much experience using black walnut in cases of scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymph glands), eczema, impetigo, acne, dandruff, boils, ringworm, shingles, rashes, poison ivy, herpes and canker sores. Black walnut compresses have also been used for eye infections and irritations of the eyelid. In Russia, black walnut tincture and compresses were used for cleansing and rapid healing of wounds.

A tea of the pulverized inner bark was used during the American civil war for both dysentery and as a mild laxative. The Cherokee Indians used black walnut as a vermifuge, particularly in cases of tapeworms. It is considered one of the mildest and surest laxatives, causing no nausea, irritation, or pain. Black walnut has also been known to strengthen and restore tooth enamel. Homeopaths use a tincture of black walnut leaves to treat cutting wisdom teeth and walnut bark is used in toothpaste in Pakistan.

The nutrient content of this tree explains much of its health benefits. Even though the tree often grows thousands of miles from the ocean, it is exceptionally high in organic iodine. Dr. Christopher supplied a laboratory with black walnut hulls and received the detailed analysis (see table below).

Analysis of black walnut

Calcium—.89%

Phosphorus—.77%

Potassium—.87%

Sodium—(trace amount)

Chlorine—.14%

Magnesium—.12%

Iron—.00021%

Manganese—182 mg./lb.

Copper—(trace amount)

Zinc—(trace amount)

Iodine—.32 mg./lb.

Sulfur—.088%

Other components found

Mucilagenous material—3.6%

Essential oil—.31%

Tannins—.72 %

Nucinerol, nucin (juglon)

and oxalic acid

Master herbalist Louise Tenney, author of Today's Herbal Health, claims that black walnut hulls and leaves also contain selenium, silica, vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, B15, C and bioflavinoids. In addition to the uses for black walnut cited above, Tenney mentions that it is useful in the treatment of the following ailments:

Inflammatory diseases such as tonsillitis, mouth sores, internal ulcerations, bleeding hemorrhoids, colitis, and abscesses; female problems such as poor lactation, profuse menstruation, leukorrhea, prolapsed uterus and varicose veins and; degenerative diseases such as cancer, tumors, lupus and candida albicans.

My herbal mentor, Dr. John Ray Christopher, shared his herbal wisdom through his life experiences of helping people. One of his more famous cases employing black walnut during World War II follows:

“I was stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington. I wanted to help people, so I went into the Army as a conscientious objector because I didn't believe in taking life. I said that I would do anything I could, even go out to the front lines with a stretcher, but that I would not kill people. Because of my status as a conscientious objector, I couldn't get any rank; I couldn't go any higher than a buck private.

“They had given me a dispensary, one of eight in North Fork, Fort Lewis, Washington. Officers and enlisted men alike came to be treated for their ailments. I was in charge of several people, including a special helper and a clean-up-man.

“One Monday morning, during the time we had our regular meetings, Major Shumate, who was over all eight dispensaries, brought in a soldier suffering from a case of impetigo contagioso. Major Shumate discussed the case: ‘I've been a consulting dermatologist, and have my own clinic in New York, as you know, which is being run for me while I am here, so I am quite experienced in skin disorders, but I have never seen a case like this.’

“The soldier had three-quarters of an inch of scab over the entire hair area; the hair had been clipped as close to the scalp as possible and the scab covered the entire hair area. This man had been hospitalized at one of the largest hospitals

in the Northwest, in fact, in the largest Army hospital in the West. He had been hospitalized nine times in all, treated with ammoniated lead and mercury and such things. The disease would subside somewhat in thirty to thirty-six days, but never completely clear. They would then release him to go back into service, but in a few days, the impetigo would pop back out again. He had gone through this procedure nine times.

"The Army wanted to release him on a medical discharge. The patient said to Major Shumate, 'I don't want a medical discharge. I came into the Army a clean man and you left me with this dirty stuff to take back to my family. I don't want to go.'

"Shumate said, 'I've brought all sorts of specialists in from all over the United States and nobody can help you. There's nothing that can be done. So you've got to take a discharge.'

"He can be healed," I said.

"Shumate whirled around to me and said, 'some of your blankety-blank herbs!'

"Yes, with some of my herbs," I calmly said. I had been through this so often, people ridiculing me, that I didn't let it upset me.

"'I don't care if he puts horse manure on my head,' said the soldier. 'If it'll heal me, do it!'

"One of the other fellows who headed one of the clinics said sarcastically, 'When's the unveiling going to be?'

"'Seven days from today,' I snapped back.

"Now this man had been hospitalized 30 to 36 days at a time and nothing worked. Here I said that in seven days the man could be cured. When they left, the dispensary heads asked if they could come back the following Monday to have the meeting in my dispensary, instead of meeting at one of the others.

Major Shumate agreed.

“The patient had to sign two papers before he was turned over to me: One stated that he was no longer a member of the United States Armed Forces, and the other said he was no longer a U.S. citizen but a foreigner, an isolated individual there at Fort Lewis under treatment. The Army could have been sued, otherwise, if anything happened to him.

“I called Salt Lake City where I knew a man who had a black walnut tree in his yard; he was a professor at the University of Utah. I asked him if he had some husks from the outside of the nuts. He said, ‘Oh, yes, we’ve harvested this year, but the husks are under two feet of snow.’

“‘Will you go out and dig up that pile of husks and send me a big sack of them up to Fort Lewis? Can you get them on a plane tonight so I can have them the following morning?’ I asked.

“He did, and I had those husks the following morning in Fort Lewis.

“I made up a gallon of tincture of black walnut using rubbing alcohol. In the Army, the dispensaries were not allowed to handle 90 proof grain alcohol; if we had had it, we could have used the tincture internally as well as externally. So I had to use rubbing alcohol, but never before and never since have I used rubbing alcohol for a tincture! The gallon of tincture was ready in two days. The usual time to make a tincture is fourteen days, but I was under a lot of pressure there, so this one was ready in two days and I credit the Lord for giving the tincture its potency.

“We made up a night-cap that covered the man’s head like a football helmet. It was made of layer after layer of gauze till it was very thick. It was covered with adhesive tape and we taped it to hold it down. At the crosses where the tape didn’t cover, there was room to insert a syringe filled with the tincture into the gauze to keep it wet. Because I lived

off the base, I was only there so many hours in the day. When I left, I instructed the next shift to keep this man under observation 24 hours a day. The man was also kept under guard as he now had the status of a foreigner.

“He spent four days, Thursday through Sunday, with the fomentation on his head. Monday morning came, and for the first time all the dispensary heads were there on time, sitting on the edges of their chairs, waiting for the show.

“The two MPs brought the soldier in, sat him down, and Major Shumate said, ‘Let’s see the case.’ So I loosened the adhesive tape where it was holding the headpiece down and took it off. Inside the helmet was three-quarters of an inch of horrible-looking scar tissue and scab. But his head was clean as a baby’s. There was no sign of impetigo at all. There had been some secondary infection where the scalp had bled, and that was healing. The men all gasped when I took off the bandages. Major Shumate used a few words I wouldn’t repeat, but then he said, ‘I have been a dermatologist for years and I have never seen a case as horrible as this—and never have I seen anything heal as rapidly as what you’ve used.’ In front of the men who were either lieutenants, majors, or captains, Major Shumate sanctioned me to treat all patients brought to me with herbs. He officially made me an herbal doctor in the United States Army, the only one known in World War II. I brought back into the dispensary cases that I had had to use the “skull and crossbones” medicines on, with no success, and I treated them with herbs—and they were healed. We got quite a name for ourselves. Men from all over Fort Lewis, even generals, came over because I had the only formula, black walnut tincture, that would heal jungle rot. The only one! And so we were very busy herbalists.”

In 2016 my friend from Lithuania who was pregnant with her second child called me feeling desperate to bring down her blood pressure. My intuition told me she needed iodine but the resources there were minimal. Knowing that black walnut hulls

and leaves are the best inland source of iodine, I asked her if she thought she could get some black walnut hulls. She said she would do that. Two weeks later she called elated. She had found some black walnut hulls in capsule form and had been taking only one capsule a day. Although I would have taken more, it was enough to resolve her health issues at the time.

In Maria Treben's book, *Health Through God's Pharmacy*, she claims that a tea of black walnut leaves cleanses the blood and is an effective remedy for all intestinal disorders, as well as for a lack of appetite. Treben says it has also been used successfully in the treatment of jaundice and diabetes. She recommends making a decoction (concentrated tea) of black walnut leaves to treat cradle-cap, dandruff, and "scruff" (scabby, scale-like deposits on the skin.) This same decoction is also an excellent remedy for head lice. She uses this same decoction for inflammation of the gums, throat and larynx. One of her uses for black walnut that I hadn't heard elsewhere was as a blood thinner. If you or anyone you know is being prescribed Coumadin, Jantoven, Marevan, Waran or a similar warfarin-based blood thinner, you may want switch from coffee in the morning to black walnut leaf tea—and drink more water! In case you didn't know, warfarin was originally marketed as a pesticide for rats and mice and works as an anti-coagulant by interfering with your body's ability to assimilate vitamin K.

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to improve your health, black walnut leaf tea is a pleasant tasting, robust tea with numerous benefits. Adding chamomile and mint leaves makes it an even more pleasant tasting tea. Bon Appetit!