

Lobelia

Lobelia – a relaxing yet stimulating herb that can “think”

by Ingri Cassel

Lobelia is considered to be one of the most important herbs to have in one's medicine chest in times of crisis. Although lobelia has been denigrated by allopathic medicine as dangerous, even causing death, countless well-known herbalists such as Dr. John R. Christopher considered it to be indispensable in their herbal repertoire. This article was written to dispel the myth of the danger of using lobelia internally while restoring this great herb to its proper role as a lifesaver when other remedies are likely to fail.

Lobelia inflata is also known as Indian tobacco, puke weed and asthma weed. It grows throughout the eastern U.S. as far west as Nebraska and Arkansas and has also been found in British Columbia. This herb is named after Mattias del Lobel, a French botanist in the 1500s. He moved to London where he was a physician who often employed lobelia in his practice. Lobelia grows 12 inches to two feet high with sparsely leaved stems and is an annual or sometimes biennial plant. The delicate flowers stem from a central stalk and are pale blue to violet in color, making lobelia a popular flowering garden plant. The herb is often harvested in July when it flowers and in October and November for its seeds, which have stronger properties than the leaves and stem. Lobelia's medicinal qualities are anti-asthmatic, anti-spasmodic, expectorant, emetic (induces vomiting), nervine, diaphoretic (induces perspiration), and diuretic.

Lobelia is both a relaxant and a stimulant – in small doses it

stimulates, especially when combined with other herbs, increasing their effectiveness, and in larger doses it relaxes musculature and constricted blood vessels. The whole herb contains lobeline and isolobelanine. Lobeline is a powerful respiratory stimulant and isolobelanine is an emetic and respiratory relaxant, stimulating catarrhal secretion and expectoration while relaxing the muscles of the respiratory system. Lobelia has a general depressant action on the central and autonomic nervous systems. It's most common use is in the treatment of asthma and bronchitis. The overall action is a truly holistic combination of stimulation and relaxation.

Samuel Thomson

Lobelia inflata was an extremely popular remedy among 19th century herbalists. Samuel Thomson, the founder of the Thomsonian System of Natural Medicine, popularized its use in the U.S. when allopathic doctors were employing radium, mercury, strychnine and other poisons in their practices. In 1805, Thomson had a thriving practice and was often called to neighboring states to treat difficult cases. His combative nature lead him into heated arguments with the standard allopathic doctors of his day who denounced his treatment methods. In 1809, Dr. French brought up charges of murder against Thomson, accusing him of the willful murder of a young man with lobelia, a deadly "poison", who had died while under his care. Thomson was thrown into prison in Newburyport, Mass. on Nov. 10, 1809 where he stayed for a month in filth and without any heat. He would have remained there for a year if it weren't for a few friends who had benefited from his work and managed to secure a hearing before Judge Parsons in a special session on Dec. 10, 1809. The court ended up acquitting Thomson since it was obvious the charges were trumped-up. Thomson proved he had used marsh rosemary root on the patient and not lobelia as the prosecution had assumed. Thomson continued to embitter so many medical men against him that in 1811, while he was passing the office door of a doctor

in Maine, the physician tried to kill him with a scythe.

The war between herbalists and allopathic doctors continues to the present day but is less noticeable due to the monopoly allopathic medicine now has with schools, hospitals, the media and our court system.

Lobelia – a poison?

Although most herbal books and online websites will warn potential users that lobelia can be poisonous, years of experience by countless herbalists have proven that far from being a poison it is actually an antidote to poison. Priddy Meeks was a Thomsonian physician in Utah in the 1800s that used lobelia extensively in treating victims of poisoning from drugs prescribed by orthodox doctors.

The following is excerpted from Priddy Meeks' journal:

“While living at Parowan [Utah], Simeon Houd got badly poisoned with strychnine so that he had his thumb amputated, but that did not seem to stop the poison from ascending up his arm and going down into his vitals, which would prove fatal. He... said to me, ‘Brother Meeks, if you cannot save me, I am gone, for if the poison gets into my vitals, it will kill me. It is now up to my shoulder.’ Never knowing Lobelia to fail in a case of poison, neither indeed in any other case, in full assurance of faith, I went to work and gave him several thorough courses of Thomsonian medicine [one course = 3 doses of lobelia tincture taken internally 10 min. apart while drinking herbal tea, usually peppermint] and in three or four days he was so much better that we all believed that nothing more was needed, as the poison was checked. He felt about well. I thought the job was completed and went home.”

Meeks then related how an angel told him to keep giving Houd the medicine since he wasn't completely cured. Meeks did so while noting that the Thomsonian medicine must be good since even Heaven approved it. He had several other similar stories

in his journal such as the case of Sister Daniel Tyler who had been poisoned by rubbing red precipitated mercury on her skin for the itch without realizing the danger. Meeks administered several courses of lobelia tincture, which soon made her well.

Herbalists of the day noted that Thomsonian medicines would seldom, if ever, disappoint you in performing a cure. Lobelia will remove obstructions wherever found in the body and restore a healthy action wherever needed. It acts like "intelligence", always in harmony with the living intention of the body, which is to remove any kind of obstruction to healing.

Lobelia – the thinking herb

Dr. John R. Christopher called lobelia the "thinking" herb and used lobelia in most of his herbal formulas. His experience taught him that when lobelia was added to a formula, it took the herbs to the parts of the body needing the remedy and was able to determine if the poisons needing to be purged would be eliminated through the bowels or through the skin (if the body was too weak to handle the circulation of the poison through the bloodstream and into the digestive tract and bowels.)

Dr. Christopher often related the story of two small boys who were both suffering from an enlarged gland on the side of their neck behind the ear. His formula for swollen and malfunctioning glands is three parts mullein and one part lobelia to be used as a tea, in capsules and/or as a fomentation. A nurse called Dr. Christopher in desperation to ask his advice on the first boy with the swollen gland. The nurse followed his advice to use the mullein/lobelia fomentation on the swollen gland. She then asked, "Which way is the toxic accumulation going to come out of the body? Will it come out directly through the skin like a bursting boil or will it be routed through the bloodstream and be taken out through the bowel?" Dr. Christopher replied that he did not know; that it would be the lobelia that would make the

“decision”. The second boy had the same sort of swelling behind his ear so his mother called the good doctor for advice. He gave her exactly the same advice and she, too, applied the same fomentation.

In the first case, the poison gathered up and burst, draining out straight through the neck. In the second case, the poison was absorbed by the body and then eliminated through the bowel.

Tetanus/Lockjaw

Dr. Christopher usually used lobelia in the form of a tincture he made by using one ounce of the herb or seed to one pint of raw apple cider vinegar. Dr. Christopher was once called out on a case where an old man had a terrible case of lockjaw. Christopher poured a small amount of the tincture into his mouth through his clenched teeth and within minutes the man opened his jaw and was able to thank the Lord for relief. The man described how he had stepped on a rusty spike when he was working out on his farm. It had penetrated through his boot and then blood poisoning occurred. Dr. Christopher saw that lobelia worked on the effect so he continued working on the cause with a plantain ointment to draw out the poison as well as using other herbs to cleanse the bowels and bloodstream of the poison.

Severe asthma case

One of Dr. Christopher's most famous “lobelia” cases involved an elderly man who had suffered from asthma for 26 years. For 20 years he had not been able to work. His two sons had built a special chair for him to sit and sleep in due to his asthma, fearing that he would die if he were to lie down. A doctor had been coming to their home in Evanston, Wyoming at least once a week either to give him a drug orally, a shot, or administer oxygen in order to keep him alive. One early morning, the doctor couldn't be reached so the two sons contacted Dr.

Christopher out of desperation. They brought their father to him at 2:00 AM and Dr. Christopher asked the old man to sip on a cup of elderberry leaf tea while they told his story, which involved mortgaging their home in order to pay for continued care under their present doctor. After 10 minutes, a teaspoon of tincture of lobelia was administered orally. After 10 min. had passed, he gave the man a second teaspoonful of lobelia tincture. He waited another 10 min. before he gave him the third dose of lobelia. The four men sat around and chatted while Christopher made sure there were pans and buckets around. All of a sudden the old man started to cough and heave. This went on until 5:00 in the morning. The old man had brought up everything he had eaten for days plus nearly a cup of yellowish green phlegm and pus from his lungs. In 40 years of practice, Dr. Christopher commented that he had never had to administer more than three teaspoonfuls of lobelia tincture to a patient. The reason for this is because each time he was called the patient was in a crisis, at the climax of the disease, which is also the right time for clearing the body of the disease.

When the man went home, he went to bed and slept horizontally for the first time in many years. He ended up sleeping a total of 30 hours straight. When he woke up, he took a deep breath of air without choking or coughing and announced that he was healed. He never experienced another asthma attack and went to work as a gardener, never missing a day's work.

Lobelia in the 21st century

Most herbalists would agree that lobelia is a valuable herb to have on hand while understanding its specific applications. One family with six children who live in the North Idaho Panhandle noted how valuable lobelia was when whooping cough affected all the children in the household. The youngest were the most affected with spasmodic coughing that kept the rest of the family up at night. Homeopathy including Scheussler biochemic cell salts were not having a major impact. When they

made a tea out of the lobelia herb, administering the tea to even the youngest children, the spasmodic coughing miraculously subsided and they recovered rapidly.

Dr. Edward Shook recommends 2 ounces of marshmallow root, 2 ounces of garden thyme, and half an ounce of lobelia to a quart of distilled water that is simmered down to a pint of liquid in a double boiler to make a strong decoction for whooping cough.

Lobelia inflata is specifically used in natural “quit smoking” patches and herbal formulas since it helps to clear the lungs of nicotine while reducing the craving for cigarettes.

Last but not least, lobelia is an excellent remedy for both preventing and treating infectious diseases. It has been used successfully in scarlet fever, measles, mumps and even mononucleosis. Many stories have been written attesting to lobelia’s ability to both prevent one from catching contagious diseases as well as treat them once infected. Lobelia’s ability to relax the body while purging it of unwanted toxins makes this a most valuable herb to have on hand in our increasingly toxic world.