

# Curative Comfrey

[rev\_slider\_vc alias="Comfrey"]The comfrey plant, *Symphytum officinale*, is a member of the borage family and has been called knitbone, bruise-wort, wound wort, healing herb and slippery root. Although comfrey is a medicinal plant, it is also grown to feed animals since it is considered the most nutrient-dense source of vegetable protein. In fact, the amount of vegetable protein obtained from every acre of comfrey can be nearly twenty times that obtained from soybeans.

Comfrey is an excellent source of vitamins A and C as well as being one of the few plants that can extract B-12 from the soil. It is also high in calcium, potassium, manganese, iron, zinc and magnesium. It contains 18 amino acids and is a good source of lysine, an amino acid usually lacking in vegan vegetarian diets. Due to comfrey's superior nutritional profile, some researchers have considered comfrey to be an answer in feeding starving nations however it does not grow well in arid or extremely hot climates.

## Henry Doubleday

English farmer Henry Doubleday (1813-1902) originally became interested in comfrey after he read an article in the Royal Agricultural Society's 1871 Journal. He had read the word "mucilaginous" and thought comfrey could be used in the manufacture of glue, possibly replacing gum arabic. He obtained some comfrey roots from St. Petersburg in Russia and began propagating them. These roots happened to be a hybrid, *Symphytum peregrinum*. It is assumed that this form of comfrey is a cross between the European comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*, and comfrey from the Caucasus mountains, *Symphytum asperrium*. This strain of comfrey is believed by many to be superior nutritionally and therapeutically to the traditional European variety.

After numerous successful applications of comfrey while raising livestock, both as food and medicine, Doubleday founded the Henry Doubleday Research Association in England. Lawrence D. Hills later became its director having worked extensively with comfrey since 1948. He is frequently credited as the impetus behind the research into comfrey being used for both food and medicine.

### **Politics of comfrey**

Although comfrey root is highly esteemed as a vulnerary (healer of wounds), it has come under fire in recent years because it contains a group of alkaloids (pyrrolizidine) that are considered hepatotoxic (harmful to the liver.) We have yet to see a study proving a direct association between the limited medicinal ingestion of comfrey root and the development of liver disease. Despite the lack of independent studies proving that limited ingestion of comfrey root damages the liver, comfrey has been banned for sale in many countries including Canada, Australia and Japan. In the U.S., comfrey root and leaf is banned for use internally. The FDA and the American Herbal Products Association warn that comfrey is for external use only and should not be applied to an open wound.

### **Comfrey, the healer**

Historically, comfrey was mostly used externally until the early 1800s. During this time, herbalists began using an infusion of the root internally for bronchitis and rheumatism.

Since then, many people have successfully used both the leaf and root of comfrey internally for a variety of complaints, our family included.

Today we know that the use of comfrey assists in the development of strong bones and healthy skin. It also promotes the secretion of pepsin and is a general aid to digestion.

It is one of the finest healers of the respiratory system and

can be used both internally and externally for the healing of fractures, wounds, sores and ulcers. It has been used with great success to check hemorrhage, whether from the stomach, lungs, bowels or uterus. It appears to have a beneficial effect on all parts of the body, and is frequently used as an overall tonic.

## **Testimonials**

Following are some quotes from articles I have collected that testify to the remarkable and miraculous healing properties of comfrey.

“Comfrey root has incredible healing power. It has basically helped everything that was hurt or bleeding on my three small children, myself, husband, dog and assorted friends. It has a rare action of being a catalyst that stimulates all cells in the area to reproduce quickly. What really impressed me was how the pain subsided. And now I’m amazed to see that it heals messy scrapes under dirt, lifting debris off with the scab in a few days with no inflammation or infection!

The root is a power house of healing energy that, when applied to a wound, makes blood coagulate which stops bleeding.. I’ll never forget when Joshua was two years old, he dropped a heavy toy on his toenail, splitting it right down the middle. I just kept sprinkling comfrey root powder over the mini-gusher of blood until only drips persisted within minutes of the accident. His sobs of pain subsided almost as quickly and one hour later, after a nap, he was proud of himself, hobbling around on his heel! The next day, at a pool party, the scab floated off exposing pink skin. His toenail grew in over the following two weeks.

Taken as a tea sweetened with honey it stopped my internal hemorrhaging after the home-birth of our third child. Our birthing assistant Betsy was concerned about my heavy bleeding, but it decreased to a normal flow after two cups of

the tea.

Betsy's ulcers never bothered her again after swallowing several pills made of the root. Years of medication didn't measure up to the quickness of comfrey roots' healing powers.

Sinus problems and bad head colds respond quite favorably to several cups of hot comfrey root tea. Sore throats melt away after a few cups. It has even soothed my stomach and gas cramps that had been known to bend me over. Headaches and menstrual discomforts cease to be a bother after a cup or two."

~Excerpted from the article, "Blood Make You Faint? Comfrey Root Powder Heals All of Life's Hard Knocks" by Judy Vallely, Health Freedom News, Vol. 6, #11, p. 40

"One interesting story is that of a registered nurse in Provo, Utah. Her 14-year-old boy broke his arm, so she rushed him to the Dugway Proving Grounds Hospital to be taken care of, as they are ex-army people. When the doctor x-rayed the arm, he told them the bone was clean broken, so clean that he would have to put the boy into a brace for a few days until knitting started, and then into a cast. He put on the brace and told them to come back in five days. The nurse told us she was anxious to get home and use the information she had learned in the lectures on comfrey. The arm was bare so on arriving home she put comfrey poultices and fomentations around the arm, and as she said, she gave him comfrey tea, comfrey green drink, comfrey tablets and capsules, and put comfrey into salads and steamed comfrey as a vegetable – in fact, she got comfrey into him every way she could think of.

In five days she took him back to Dugway to get the cast on and when the doctor came out of the dark room with the new x-ray he said, 'What have you done to this boy?' the nurse said, 'What do you mean doctor?' his answering retort was, 'Don't be coy with me. You're a registered nurse and this boy's arm is

completely healed and the bone knit together without a hairline crack – it is perfect in five days- what did you use?’ So she told him. Here was a boy healed of a broken bone in five days, x-rays before and after for proof (the fastest bone healing we know of).”

~excerpted from the article “Comfrey – Heaven’s Gift to Man” by Dr. John R. Christopher, M.H., The Herbalist, Volume 1, Number 5, 1976.

Another story from the same article:

“A lady managing a china shop in Provo, Utah, came to us a few years ago, asking if a friend of hers could be helped. She said one-and-a-half vertebrae had deteriorated completely in her back, and the vertebrae below and above were so weak that fusing could not be done.

She could not sit up or walk, but just lay there waiting for the spine to continue deteriorating until she died. We told the lady that her friend could be helped if she would follow our instructions. The back was to be kept with fomentations and/or poultices of comfrey on it, and she was put onto the mucusless diet with lots of fresh raw juice and many cups of comfrey tea each day, slippery elm gruel and a nerve palliative tea combination.

In six months, the one and one-half vertebrae grew back in the same form as before (the good Lord left plans and specifications) in the form of cartilage so the woman could sit and walk again. In another six months, the cartilage turned into bone and she had a perfect back from neck through tailbone with no more trouble. The physician took x-rays of the back with vertebrae gone and later again with them back in place, built like new by the body.”

There are so many fabulous comfrey stories they could literally fill a 500-page book. We hope this article has inspired you to make sure you have it growing in your

backyard. If it is not growing near your home, reserve a place in your yard for it and consult with your community master gardeners about obtaining a few fresh roots.

**Following are a few personal stories:**

In 1999, my husband Don called home to ask me what to do for the burn his son had sustained while stepping on a burning coal. In the meantime, he had submersed the boy's foot in cold water. I had given him a root of the comfrey plant earlier this spring since I am fanatical about this plant being in everyone's yard.

Ascertaining what Don had on hand, I told him to chew up a comfrey leaf, spit it out, mix the pulp with raw honey and apply liberally in the form of a poultice to his burn. The pain went away almost instantaneously. By this point a large blister had formed which the boy refused to pop but the pain was gone and he was mobile again.

I was reminded in August 1999 of the more miraculous virtues of comfrey. Don and I had met with a couple in Kooskia, Idaho and the man told us the following story: He is a welder and had an accident a few years past in which he lost the tip of his finger. Knowing the virtues of comfrey, he ground up some fresh comfrey root and applied it to his missing fingertip. He kept it bandaged in this way until it healed. When he showed us his finger, there wasn't even a scar and there was absolutely no evidence of the mishap ever occurring.

Don was visibly impressed since he lost the tip of his right middle finger several years ago and had gone the medical route. Don was left with a claw of a finger as evidence.

In 1997, I had one of my herbal students call me about her son who had his hand cut severely in a log sawing accident. After the boy had visited the doctor and had a fairly grim prognosis, she asked what I would do (The doctor mentioned skin grafts, reattaching nerves and the prospect of a bill

over \$5,000).

I reminded her of the value of the comfrey plant. She was a bit apprehensive so I told her to bring him over. We made a poultice using comfrey root and instructed him to drink lots of comfrey tea, carrot juice and take some B,F, & C (Bone, Flesh & Cartilage) capsules. After two days, she called me rather upset. He was still in a lot of pain and she didn't have faith that it was working. I calmed her down and asked how HE was working (He was young and enjoyed beer and cigarettes). She admitted that he wasn't sticking to the program as outlined. He got with the program and I never heard from them about the incident. Several years later I asked the father about the results and if their son healed without a scar. He was embarrassed to admit that both he and his wife did not have the faith they needed in God's herbs. They had scraped away the comfrey root that was in the process of forming new skin, nerves and tissue to see if it was healing underneath. They put a fresh poultice on and hoped for the best. As a result, their son has a permanent scar but has regained full mobility and use of his hand. But they both learned a powerful lesson. They now know the power of comfrey and won't question its virtues in the future.

More recently (around 2007), Don was cutting some meat up to make venison jerky. The knife slipped and he cut his hand down to the bone between his thumb and first finger. A lot of blood was flowing out of the cut so I had to think fast. I grabbed some cayenne pepper and saturated the cut with it until the blood began coagulating and then I applied a generous amount of comfrey root powder and wrapped it up with gauze and adhesive tape. We left it on that way for a day and only opened up the bandage to apply more comfrey root. We also started to blend comfrey leaves in our morning smoothie.

A few months later, Don was in a store and saw that the young man had his hand bandaged up so he asked him what happened. Apparently, the man had a similar mishap with a cut in his

hand to the bone, but he went to the hospital. Don was only too happy to share with this man his story and show him his completely healed hand with a very small scar still showing where the cut originally took place.

+++++

Comfrey is often viewed as a weed as it grows prolifically in most soils and in most climates found throughout North America. Comfrey is one herb to make sure you always have on your property and an ample supply should be harvested and dried for use in the winter.

It appears that we have lost much valuable history regarding the proven therapeutic value of this plant and countless others. The importance of having access to plants such as comfrey is obvious: The more dependent upon pharmaceutical remedies we become, the sicker we become individually and as a society – physically as well as spiritually. If we are to regain our health, then we must relearn how to take better care of ourselves and the people who depend upon us.

**Warning:** If you give credence to the FDA and its recommendations, this article is not for you. This article is intended for those who choose to take personal responsibility for their health and are sensitive and respond appropriately to their body's reactions to different foods and products. The FDA has banned the use of comfrey for internal consumption and it was banned altogether several years ago. In fact, do not attempt to bring this herb into Canada, where it is illegal and the penalty is the same as transporting marijuana over the border.