

Medicinal Plants

Humans have practiced herbal medicine throughout most of our history and all around the world. Here at The Battery, we grow a variety of medicinal plants — some that we purposefully cultivate and others that sprout on their own as weeds throughout the garden. This guide represents only a small sample of The Battery's many plants with medicinal uses. Our Forest Farm, including the gardens of the Labyrinth, features many native edible and medicinal plants. We welcome you to use the guide below to acquaint yourself with these plants that support the holistic wellbeing of our ecosystem. The guide highlights how humans use each plant medicinally, and notes native range for each.

Feel free to touch and smell, but **please refrain from harvesting the plants**. If you grow or purchase such plants yourself, be sure to consult with a trained herbal or medical practitioner before using them to treat any health conditions.



Artemisia vulgaris
Mugwort

Native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa

Mugwort has a variety of applications, ranging from nervous system calibration to treatment of parasites. Topical applications are used to heal sprains and bruises. *A. vulgaris* is edible, and all plant parts may be used. It is believed to support lucid dreaming and have protective powers.



Cirsium arvense
Canada Thistle

Native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa

Thistles are powerful spiky protectors and are edible for humans if the spines are removed. A tea made from the roots treats diarrhea and a diuretic tea from the leaves is sometimes used to treat tuberculosis. Externally, *C. arvense* can be used to relieve some rashes and skin irritations.



Diospyros virginiana
American Persimmon

Native to eastern United States

The ripe fruits of *D. virginiana* are rich in vitamin C. Unripe fruits and the bark of this tree are highly astringent and loaded with tannins. Decoctions (made by boiling plant material in water) can be used as a rinse to treat thrush and mouth sores, or topically to treat warts or other skin problems.

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THE BATTERY



Eurybia macrophylla
Big Leaf Aster

Native to eastern and central North America

Many First Nations peoples harvest and cook the young, large leaves, and use the roots for medicinal decoctions or broths. The Haudenosaunee peoples in the United States traditionally make a decoction of the roots to treat constipation and some viral and bacterial diseases. Anishinaabe peoples have also used the plant to make a headache-soothing wash and as part of a smoke to attract deer for hunting.



Galinsoga quadriradiata
Hairy Galinsoga

Native to Central and South America

Known as *guasacas* in Spanish, this nutritious plant is used as a base for the soup *ajjaco*, as well as in salads and smoothies. *G. quadriradiata* has anti-inflammatory properties and can be used to neutralize the sting of stinging nettles. A 2007 University of KwaZulu Natal study found that galinsoga may be valuable in treating some cardiovascular conditions and diabetes.



Mentha piperita
Peppermint

Native to Europe and western Asia

Chinese medical literature of the 7th century documents the use of peppermint. The plant's leaves, stems, and oil have been used around the world for hundreds, if not thousands, of years to create teas, tinctures, and salves. Peppermint products are used to reduce fevers and pain and as digestive remedies.



Oxalis stricta
Wood Sorrel

Native to eastern United States

Wood sorrel leaves, buds, and flowers are a tart and tasty addition to salads and smoothies. However, when ingested in large amounts, the plant's high oxalic acid content may produce indigestion or tax the kidneys. The plant is rich in vitamin C and makes a sour, lemonade-like tea. It has a cooling and astringent effect and can be used in a poultice or an infusion.



Persicaria pensylvanica
Smartweed

Native to North America

This prolific weed with pink flowers has coagulant and astringent properties. Infusions of the plant tops have been used in the treatment of epilepsy, and infusions of the leaves have been used to aid postpartum healing and treat haemorrhages. The leaves are also used as a wipe or poultice to treat some inflammation.



Potentilla indica
False Strawberry

Native to Asia

Also called “mock strawberry,” *P. indica* is smaller, seedier, and less sweet than cultivated strawberries. Its medicinal uses are numerous, and include treatment of fevers, boils and abscesses, inflammation of the mouth and lips, laryngitis, acute tonsillitis, snake and insect bites, and traumatic injuries. Western medical studies have shown the plant may stimulate the immune system in mice.



Pycnanthemum virginianum
Mountain Mint

Native to eastern North America

This edible plant is used to treat coughs and fevers and is also sometimes used as an analgesic and a stimulant. Some traditions hold that mountain mint placed in the nostrils can help bring vitality back to an ailing or dying person.



Sambucus canadensis
American Elderberry

Native to eastern North America

The clusters of white flowers give way to purple berries. After cooking, the berries can be used to make wine, syrups, jam, and medicine. When raw, however, the berries can cause digestive distress. Some herbalists also use the flowers, bark, and leaves for medicinal purposes. The elder has magical and protective powers in many cultures including Hoodoo, Indigenous American, and Celtic traditions.



Taraxacum officinale
Dandelion

Native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa

A nutritionally valuable bitter green, rich in vitamin A, *T. officinale* has been used by herbalists to treat a range of conditions including early stages of cirrhosis, anemia, diabetes, warts, acne, blisters, corns, and others. All the plant parts can be used in one way or another. Some people enjoy a dandelion tisane as a caffeine-free alternative to coffee.



Zizia aurea
Golden Alexander

Native to eastern North America

A relative of carrots and parsley, *Z. aurea* blooms primarily in the spring with nectar-rich yellow flowers. The plant serves as a host plant for the larval caterpillars of the Black Swallowtail butterfly. The leaves and flowers are edible, and the root is used medicinally to reduce fevers and treat wounds.