



A REVIEW ON PHARMACOGNOSTIC AND PHYTOPHARMACOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ARTEMISIA VULGARIS

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ABSTRACT

Artemisia vulgaris is a perennial growing to 1.2 m (4ft) by 0.7 m (2ft 4in) at a fast rate. It is hardy to zone (UK) 3 and is not frost tender. It is in flower from Jul to September. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Wind. Suitable for: light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils and can grow in very alkaline soils. It can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade. It prefers dry or moist soil and can tolerate drought. Synonyms: *Absinthium spicatum*. *Artemisia affinis*. *Artemisia coerctata*. *Artemisia officinalis*. leaves - raw or cooked. Aromatic and somewhat bitter. Their addition to the diet aids the digestion and so they are often used in small quantities as a flavouring, especially with fatty foods. They are also used to give colour and flavour to glutinous-rice dumplings. The young shoots are used in spring. In Japan the young leaves are used as a potherb. The dried leaves and flowering tops are steeped into tea. They have also been used as a flavouring in beer, though fell into virtual disuse once hops came into favour. It is used as Anticonvulsant; Antidepressant; Antiemetic; Antiseptic; Antispasmodic; Appetizer; Carminative; Cholagogue; Diaphoretic; Digestive; Diuretic; Emmenagogue; Expectorant; Foot care; Haemostatic; Nervine; Purgative; Stimulant; Tonic; Women's complaints.

KEY WORDS: Perennial, Hermaphrodite, Glutinous-rice dumplings, Appetizer Cholagogue Emmenagogue etc.

INTRODUCTION

Artemisia vulgaris (mugwort^[1] or common wormwood) is one of several species in the genus *Artemisia* commonly known as mugwort, although *Artemisia vulgaris* is the species most often called mugwort. This species is also occasionally known as felon herb, chrysanthemum weed, wild wormwood, old Uncle Henry, sailor's tobacco, naughty man, old man or St. John's plant (not to be confused with St John's wort).^[2] Mugworts have been used medicinally and as culinary herbs.

Mugwort abounds on hedgebanks and waysides in most parts of England. It is a tall-growing plant, the stems, which are angular and often of a purplish hue, frequently rising 3 feet or more in height. The leaves are smooth and of a dark green tint on the upper surface, but covered with a dense cottony down beneath; they are once or twice pinnately lobed, the segments being lanceshaped and pointed. The flowers are in small oval heads with

cottony involucre and are arranged in long, terminal panicles; they are either reddish or pale yellow. The Mugwort is closely allied to the Common Wormwood, but may be readily distinguished by the leaves being white on the under-surfaces only and by the leaf segments being pointed, not blunt. It lacks the essential oil of the Wormwood. The Mugwort is said to have derived its name from having been used to flavour drinks. It was, in common with other herbs, such as Ground Ivy, used to a great extent for flavouring beer before the introduction of hops. For this purpose, the plant was gathered when in flower and dried, the fresh herb being considered unsuitable for this object: malt liquor was then boiled with it so as to form a strong decoction, and the liquid thus prepared was added to the beer. Until recent years, it was still used in some parts of the country to flavour the table beer brewed by cottagers. It has also been suggested that the name, Mugwort, may be derived not from 'mug,' the drinking vessel, but from moughte (a moth or maggot), because from the days of

Dioscorides, the plant has been regarded, in common with Wormwood, as useful in keeping off the attacks of moths. In the Middle Ages, the plant was known as Cingulum Sancti Johannis, it being believed that John the Baptist wore a girdle of it in the wilderness. There were many superstitions connected with it: it was believed to preserve the wayfarer from fatigue, sunstroke, wild beasts and evil spirits generally: a crown made from its sprays was worn on St. John's Eve to gain security from evil possession, and in Holland and Germany one of its names is St. John's Plant, because of the belief, that if gathered on St. John's Eve it gave protection against diseases and misfortunes.^[3]

Dr. John Hill extols its virtues, and says: 'Providence has placed it everywhere about our doors; so that reason and authority, as well as the notice of our senses, point it out for use: but chemistry has banished natural medicines.' Dioscorides praises this herb, and orders the flowering tops to be used just before they bloom. The dried leaves were, sixty or seventy years ago, in use by the working classes in Cornwall as one of the substitutes for tea, at a time when tea cost 7s. per lb., and on the Continent Mugwort is occasionally employed as an aromatic culinary herb, being one of the green herbs with which geese are often stuffed during roasting. The downy leaves have been used in the preparation of Moxas, which the Japanese use to cure rheumatism. The down is separated by heating the leaves and afterwards rubbing them between the hands until the cottony fibres alone remain, these are then made up into small cones or cylinders for use. *Artemisia Moxa* and *A. sinensis* are mainly used in Japan. This cottony substance has also been used as a substitute for tinder. Sheep are said to enjoy the herbage of the Mugwort, and also the roots. The plant may, perhaps, be the *Artemisia* of Pontos, which was celebrated among the ancients for fattening these animals. It is said to be good for poultry and turkeys.^[3]

DESCRIPTION

Common name: Mugwort, Moxa, Traveler's Herb, Artemis Herb, Felon Herb, Muggons, Old Man, Sailor's Tobacco. Cingulum Sancti Johannis aka St. John's plant (NOT St. Johnswort).^[4]

Distribution: *Artemisia vulgaris* is native to temperate Europe, Asia, northern Africa and Alaska and is naturalized in North America^[5], where some consider it an invasive weed. It is a very common plant growing on nitrogenous soils, like weedy and uncultivated areas, such as waste places and roadsides.

Scientific classification^[6]

Kingdom: Plantae
(unranked): Angiosperms
(unranked): Eudicots
(unranked): Asteroideae
Order: Asterales
Family: Asteraceae

Genus: *Artemisia*
Species: *A. vulgaris*

Binomial name: *Artemisia vulgaris*.

About plant: *Artemisia vulgaris* is a tall herbaceous perennial plant growing 1–2 m (rarely 2.5 m) tall, with a woody root. The leaves are 5–20 cm long, dark green, pinnate and sessile, with dense white tomentose hairs on the underside. The erect stems are grooved and often have a red-purplish tinge. The rather small florets (5 mm long) are radially symmetrical with many yellow or dark red petals. The narrow and numerous capitula (flower heads), all fertile, spread out in racemose panicles. It flowers from mid-summer to early autumn.^[7]



Fig: Flowering plant of Artemisia.

Habitat and growing conditions: Grows almost everywhere around the world. If you look as you travel Mugwort is everywhere around us here in the Northeast, USA. She grows in all the waste places through out our cities and particularly along all the roadways. I don't believe this is an accident. For two reasons: The first being Mugwort protects the traveler and so she hugs our road ways, watching out for us. The second: In these times of rushing around and living totally in the physical experience, Human Kind has never needed the gifts of Mugwort more. We need her gifts of Dreaming to bring us into the Spirit Realm and teach us to live in balance in both the Spirit and the Physical. Conversely she will bring those lost in the Spirit world back into the Physical. This also means that Mugwort will help those of us who are considered "spacey" to become more "grounded" as well. Can be intrusive in a garden. Grows up to 8 feet in The Garden. Look for it that tall as well as low as 18" in city lots and road sides.^[8]

Harvesting: For medicinal, metaphysical and culinary purposes cut stems with leaves early in the day; after the sun has burned the dew off but before the heat of the day. Always feel free to attune to the individual plant as to when it is the optimal time for harvest; keeping in mind if the plant is damp it can easily get moldy when drying. For ornamental: any time needed.^[9]

Drying: Can be dried for either medicinal, metaphysical, culinary or ornamental purposes. Take bundles of stems with leaves and remove the lower leaves for about 3 – 4". Do not wash in water; if they are wet they are likely to get moldy. Check over the plants for obvious dirt and insects, and remove those leaves. Take several bundles (not too many or there will not be enough air circulation), tie with string or a rubber band and hang upside down in a cool room out of direct light. Normal room temperature is fine; just no hot dry rooms or damp rooms. It will take several days to a week or so to dry completely. You may leave them there longer, as they are very attractive but not so long that they become dirty with dust or become too dry. Take the bundles down, when dry, and pull off the leaves and place in a large bowl. "Scrunch" the leaves up to crumble them some and then place in air tight glass jars. Store in a room or cupboard out of direct light in a dry room. You can take the leafless stems and bundle them up and tie them with strings and use them as kindling for wood stoves; I like to use them for building Sacred Fires. (Just be sure you want her attributes included in your Ritual) . You can also roll leaves and stems into Smudge sticks (see my article on making your own Smudge sticks). Try gathering the dew in the early morning and store it in jars with 1/3 to 1/2 80 to 100 proof alcohol or drink immediately. The effects would be similar to the Flower Essence. Water can also be used in the making of Magical elixirs.^[10, 11]

Parts Used Medicinally: The leaves, collected in August and dried in the same manner as Wormwood, and the root, dug in autumn and dried. The roots are cleansed in cold water and then freed from rootlets. Drying may be done at first in the open air, spread thinly, as contact may turn the roots mouldy. Or they may be spread on clean floors, or on shelves, in a warm room for about ten days, and turned frequently. When somewhat shrunken, they must be finished more quickly by artificial heat in a drying room or shed, near a stove or gas fire, care being taken that the heated air can escape at the top of the room. Drying in an even temperature will probably take about a fortnight, or more. It is not complete until the roots are dry to the core and brittle, snapping when bent. Mugwort root is generally about 8 inches long, woody, beset with numerous thin and tough rootlets, 2 to 4 inches long, and about 1/12 inch thick. It is light brown externally; internally whitish, with an angular wood and thick bark, showing five or six resin cells. The taste is sweetish and acrid.^[3]

Constituents: A volatile oil, an acrid resin, Thujone, and tannin.^[3]

Medicinal Action and Uses: It has stimulant and slightly tonic properties, and is of value as a nervine and emmenagogue, having also diuretic and diaphoretic action. Its chief employment is as an emmenagogue, often in combination with Pennyroyal and Southernwood. It is also useful as a diaphoretic in the

commencement of cold. It is given in infusion, which should be prepared in a covered vessel, 1 OZ. of the herb to 1 pint of boiling water, and given in 1/2 teaspoonful doses, while warm. The infusion may be taken cold as a tonic, in similar doses, three times daily: it has a bitterish and aromatic taste. As a nervine, Mugwort is valued in palsy, fits, epileptic and similar affections, being an old-fashioned popular remedy for epilepsy (especially in persons of a feeble constitution). Gerard says: 'Mugwort cureth the shakings of the joynts inclining to the Palsie;' and Parkinson considered it good against hysteria. A drachm of the powdered leaves, given four times a day, is stated by Withering to have cured a patient who had been affected with hysterical fits for many years, when all other remedies had failed. The juice and an infusion of the herb were given for intermittent fevers and agues. The leaves used to be steeped in baths, to communicate an invigorating property to the water.^[3]

Preparations-Fluid extract: Culpepper directs that the tops of the plant are to be used fresh gathered, and says: 'a very slight infusion is excellent for all disorders of the stomach, prevents sickness after meals and creates an appetite, but if made too strong, it disgusts the taste. The tops with the flowers on them, dried and powdered, are good against agues, and have the same virtues with wormseed in killing worms. The juice of the large leaves which grows from the root before the stalk appears is the best against the dropsy and jaundice, in water, ale, wine, or the juice only. The infusion drank morning and evening for some time helps hysterics, obstruction of the spleen and weakness of the stomach. Its oil, taken on sugar and drank after, kills worms, resists poison, and is good for the liver and jaundice. eyes like the leaves, hence the root should be accounted among the best stomachics. The oil of the seed cures quotidian and quartans. Boiled in lard and laid to swellings of the tonsils and quinsy is serviceable. It is admirable against surfeits.... Wormwood and vinegar are an antidote to the mischief of mushrooms and henbane and the biting of the seafish called *Draco marinus*, or quaviver; mixed with honey, it takes away blackness after falls, bruises, etc., . . With Pellitory of the Wall used as poultice to ease all outward pains. Placed among woolen cloths it prevents and destroys the moths'.^[3]

PHARMACOLOGY^[12, 13, 14]

Properties: Chologogue, vermifuge, emmenagogue, hemostatic, antispasmodic, diaphoretic, mild narcotic, bitter narcotic. Woman's Moon and a Dream Herb.

Body Systems affected: Spleen, kidney, liver.

Dosage: Metaphysical: Tea or tincture twice daily to enhance your psychic abilities. (see below for amounts)

Medicinal

One teaspoon per cup for infusion. 5 – 20 drops tincture. Mugwort can also be smoked for either medicinal or metaphysical purposes.

Flower Essence

Artemisia douglasiana, a close relative of *Artemisia vulgaris* is used. Used for clarity in dream work. Helps us to interpret our dreams and merge the knowledge and insights gained in dreams and any spiritual/magickal work into our every day lives. Helps to regulate menstrual cycles in time with the Moon. Add to massage oil and worked into the womb area to ease childbirth and menstrual problems.

Homeopathic

Artemisia vulgaris. Epilepsy, petit mal, hysteria, over excitement and fright, sleepwalking, some types of dizziness. Irregular, painful or scanty menses. Prolapsed uterus. To prevent miscarriage with severe cramping.

Metaphysical Uses

This is one of my favorite metaphysical herbs. I grow a hedge of it in The Garden between the main garden and the rose arbors. (alas; this part of The Garden no long exists due to my inability to keep up with the work. It will be restored. Good news is the Mugwort and others are still in there; just gone wild). Mugwort is most famous for it's use as a "Dream" herb. It is known to enhance dreaming, both in sleep and in Shamanic Journeying, Hedge Riding and other trance work. It is said to enhance whatever level of dreaming one is developed in. For example, if one can not remember one's dreams, Mugwort will enhance and help the individual to develop this. If one is at the next level of dreaming, cognitive dreaming; (being aware one is dreaming and being able to "manipulate" the dream at will) Mugwort will enhance this. The final level is precognitive dreaming; dreaming of future events. No matter what level one is dreaming Mugwort will help you to develop your abilities. But beware, for until you become proficient your dreams may, at first, be difficult to deal with. Don't be discouraged; practice makes perfect. If you desire you might study under an experienced Dreamer or Shaman. Keeping a journal would be advantageous. I have heard people say that their dreams become "techni-colored" after taking Mugwort. Mugwort is also used as a Warding herb (to repel/banish) negative energies, entities/spirits, wild beasts, weariness. Mugwort in your shoes will help keep your strength up in long walks and generally protect you during a journey (hence the name Traveler's herb). Used for smudging and incense in the same manner as the other *Artemisia* and *Salvias*. Burn near your bed before sleep for protection and dream enhancement. A good herb for clearing negativity from the home. It is my feeling that when used as a smudge during house clearing it leaves a bit of "Magical" energy behind. I believe it will bring Magic closer into your lifestyle when used this way. I believe every act we perform is on some level, a Magical one and so Mugwort enhances this. Whether you're doing actual Ritual Magic or Mundane Magic (cooking, washing dishes, etc.), burning Mugwort nearby or before starting will heighten your work.

Other uses: Store dry herb with your scrying tools as well as any tools you use for Dreaming/Journey work, such as drums, beater sticks and rattles. Oil made from fresh can be used to anoint these objects also. An infusion (strong tea) can be used to wash them. Make swags or wreaths from dry or fresh branches to place over your doors for protection against negative energies. Many believe it will also ward off negative entities. Toss into a burning fireplace or wood stove and it will protect you from lightning; though if you simply burned it in the fire place or stove by itself I would think you would get the same effect.

Miscellaneous uses: Sacred to Dianna and Artemis. Wear a crown on Midsummer. Throw into fire when done to protect one's self from sickness and danger for the coming year. Protective of Children. Though Cunningham refers to her as an Earth energy plant she is known as a Moon plant also in regards to her sacredness to Artemis (Dianna) who is a Moon Goddess. Also from her assistance in woman's Menstrual/Moon cycles. Gladstar recommends it as a Dream Herb during a woman's Moon Time. Mugwort is also ruled by Venus.

Medicinal Uses

1. An excellent nervine. Used for insomnia and nervousness.
2. Kills parasitic worms internally.
3. Mugwort is considered feminine in nature and has been linked through out history has been used as remedy for women's health. It is an emmenagogue; promotes suppressed menses. Drink before and after the full moon and wear red (Gladstar). Useful for young women just starting menses.
4. Believed to increase fertility.
5. Used for moxabustion in Chinese Medicine.
6. Used in treatment of liver disorders and as a digestive aid (digestive bitter). Drink infusion before and/or after eating to promote digestion.
7. Promotes sweating. Which can be a benefit when intentionally sweating out an illness; a very old healing technique when one first feels the effects of an illness.
8. Strong infusion can be used in a bath for an invigorating bath or one before Ritual or Dreaming.
9. **Culinary:** One of the first herbs to be used to brew beers. Dried leaves only. Apparently fresh leaves make a horrible tasting beer.

Cautions: Do not use if pregnant. Though no miscarriage have ever been reported due to it's use and in TCM and Homeopathy it is used to prevent miscarriage. Though it is a good rule of thumb to avoid

all herbs that are emmenagogue in general when pregnant.

CONCLUSION

Finally here we concluded that the **mugwort** plant contains essential oils (such as cineole, or wormwood oil, and thujone), flavonoids, triterpenes, and coumarin derivatives. It was also used as an anthelmintic, so it is sometimes confused with wormwood (**Artemisia absinthium**). Mugwort is one of the power herbs that got us more than interested in the positive effects of herbs. How amazing that some Mugwort leaf placed under the pillow will not only induce colourful and lucid dreaming, but dreams of prophecy and meaning as well. For those skeptics out there try it. One morning you will wake up after dreaming of something and you'll witness its manifestation that very day. At the very least, you will experience colourful, medieval, astral, meaningful, pleasant, adventurous, and/or lucid dreams. Smoking the herb directly into the lungs or as an evening incense assists these lucid dreams. Drinking the calming, liver cleansing tea before sleep seems to keep you longer in a conscious dream state (REM sleep).

Mugwort is also excellent for placing in your dancing shoes, boots, joggers or sandals to relieve aching feet or sore leg muscles. The carrying of Mugwort reminds one to remain calm and to appreciate the reality of the now, that precious present moment of eternity. Another revealed 'secret' of Mugwort is that it can be smoked for pain relief and can also be applied externally as a poultice for pain relief, boils, carbuncles, abscesses or tropical ulcers. It even makes an excellent bath additive for relieving tired limbs, rheumatism and gout. Mugwort is the one herb used in moxa healing, especially favoured by Chinese doctors. You can do your own emergency moxa by rolling leaves of Mugwort into a cigarette and hold the burning end near a painful area. It works! Mugwort gives power to us, the people. It is also an excellent herb to burn for meditation and peace. Mugwort is also used to reduce the side effects of commonly smoked herbs. Interestingly, Culpeper of the 17th century also claimed that 'Mugwort juice is a special remedy for excessive opium use ...' (yet to be trialled!). We grow Mugwort for our farm animals as a natural wormer, thus avoiding toxic chemicals for that purpose. Interestingly, they chew a little from time to time ... animals instinctively know what's good for them. Meanwhile we dumb humans continually allow ourselves to be exploited by the greed of others."

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