



Mugwort: *Artemisia vulgaris*

Mugwort, Felon Herb, Cronewort, Motherwort (not to be confused with Leonurus cardiaca), Chrysanthemum Weed, Sailor's Tobacco, St. John's plant, Moxa

Overview and Identification: Mugwort is a common plant in North America, found widely in Pennsylvania. One of the largest stands of Mugwort Dana has ever seen is along the Kiskiminetas River in Saltsburg, PA; another big stand is along where TwoLick and Yellow Creeks meet in Homer City, but you can find it along many rivers or also in open fields throughout our area. This green, plant with deeply lobed dark leaves can grow up to 6' tall and can be found in full shade to full sun. It can become invasive easily, so consider where you might plant it. The underside of the leaves have a silvery-white hue and taper to a point. The stems are purple-brown and covered in small hairs. The flowers are very small and clustered, about the size of a pin head and bloom in our region in August.



Harvest: You can generally harvest as much Mugwort as you want, and harvest throughout the season. The best time to harvest is either leaves before the Mugwort flowers or the flowering tops (the volatile/essential oils are at the highest concentration then). Roots can be dug after the plant dies back for winter.

Herbalism Overview

- **Taste:** Bitter, pungent, and fragrant (not as bitter as some other Artemisias)
- **Herbal Actions:** Alterative, anthelmintic (dispels parasites), antiseptic, bitter (tonic), carminative, cholagogue, cholaretic, diaphoretic, diuretic, emmenagogue, nervine (relaxant), oneirogen (promotes dreams and encourages deeper REM sleep)
- **Organ and System Affinities:** Reproductive system (emmenagogue), digestive (bitter, carminative), kidneys (diuretic), circulatory (aromatic, diaphoretic), nervous system (nervine relaxant)

- **Addressing tissue states:** Slightly warming (but may be impacted by the form you take); addresses damp, cold, and stagnant states; specifically works with “torpor” and bad blood (liver condition).

Mugwort is a very ancient herb of great importance throughout the history of Europe and Western herbalism. Matthew Wood notes that Mugwort was included the Anglo Saxon *Charm of the Nine Worts*, where Mugwort was listed as the “eldest wyrta” or “oldest of plants.” Note that the term wort = a term for medicinal plants of ancient origin – Mugwort, Motherwort, St. Johns Wort, Lungwort, Woundwort). Mugwort was also known as a strongly protective herb, especially when burned (and it is a very old incense plant). In China, Mugwort is created into “moxa” which is burned close to the skin as an alternative to acupuncture (a practice going back to the 300 BC).

Uses: Mugwort has a wide range of uses. One of the reasons Mugwort is wonderful to learn is because of how abundant this plant is—so find a patch, harvest, and learn her well!

- **Oneirogen / Dream herb:** Perhaps Mugwort’s most well-known and well-loved use, this plant helps us both bring us into a deeper REM state and also encourage more dreaming.
- **Alterative:** Alteratives support the body’s detoxification systems, removing cellular debris, metabolic waste, and dead viral and bacterial cells. Mugwort works on many systems, but has a strong action on the liver.
- **Anthelmintic:** Many species in the Artemesia family are great at dispelling parasites from the body; Mugwort is particularly good at addressing intestinal parasites.
- **Antiseptic:** Mugwort can be used internally (contact) or topically to have an anti-fungal and anti-bacterial effect, most strongly on the skin or GI tract.
- **Digestive Support:** Mugwort has a range of actions on the GI tract.
 - **Bitter (tonic):** Bitters support a healthy digestive system through a variety of actions; Mugwort is especially helpful for those who have slow, sluggish (cold) digestive tracts as it is constitutionally warming. Mugwort increases bile from the gall bladder and liver, which helps break down fats and oils and digest them better.
 - **Carminative:** Due to both the bitter and volatile oil, it has a mild relaxant action on the GI, also increasing circulation and bringing heat. This is very useful for bloating, gas, or even undigested /partially digested food.
 - **Diaphoretic:** As an aromatic and warming plant, Mugwort can be used to increase peripheral circulation, increasing perspiration (which cools the body by releasing heat). Thus, Mugwort can be included in plants to support a healthy fever response (along with Boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum) and Elderflower (Sambucus canadensis))
- **Diuretic:** Diuretics increase the flow of urine from the system. Mugwort has also been used to treat systemic edema. While it is not a strong action of Mugwort, it is present (suggesting you might use this in a blend with other plants for a stronger action).

- **Emmenagogue:** Used to stimulate menstruation, Mugwort helps increase circulation to the uterus, and can be particularly helpful with painful, slow periods with lots of cramps and clotting.
- **Nervine relaxant:** There are very few warming relaxants (most of them are cooling). Mugwort has a gentle and yet powerful effect to support people who are anxious, stressed, confused, or nervous. It has also been used as a treatment for epilepsy, tremors, seizures, insomnia (especially when resulting from stress) and other nervous disorders. It has a mild sedative effect on the entire nervous system.
- **Therapeutic and Spiritual Incense herb:** Burning herbs releases essential oils into the air, which helps clear the air and has a direct antiseptic action on the room (this is really good for your house when someone is sick, coughing, etc). You can also burn Mugwort for spiritual purposes, including cleansing, clearing, and protection.
- **Baths:** In Asia, Mugwort is also added to baths, for skin and beauty purposes.

The Mugwort Person: The person who would benefit from Mugwort has a colder constitution, may have a sluggish body (even when the mind is awake). They may also be sleep challenged and have a very active imagination, sensitivity to light. They may suffer from constipation, cramping, and also have cold hands and feet. Those who over-use cannabis can benefit from this plant. Mugwort is a wonderful herb for dyslexic people or those who have other language-related challenges. Women who have irregular menstrual bleeding, pain, clotting, or strong starts to their period would benefit from Mugwort.

Preparation and Use

Parts Used: Flowering tops, leaves, roots (less commonly used)

Preparation: You can prepare Mugwort as a cold or hot infusion (cold infusion is way more bitter than the hot infusion and is better for GI issues); 1 tbsp per cup of water. Tincture (1:5 in 50% alcohol, 10-25 drops). For dreaming, only a few drops are needed.

Contraindications: Should not be used by pregnant women (**emmenagogue**) or those who are breastfeeding (can halt lactation). Those who are allergic to the Asteraceae family may also have challenges with Mugwort. No drug interactions known.