

PRACTICAL HERB CARDS



Henriette Kress

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Lastly, before the cards proper:

Larger versions of the plant family icons.



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You can tell alders from their cones.



Alder flowers. The hanging catkins are male, the tiny red nubbins are female.

The young leaves of black alder are sticky and rather tasty.



CARD # 8

ALDER

In Finland, we have two species of alder: speckled alder (*Alnus incana*) and black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). All species of alder can be used, although some species' leaves are more aromatic than those of others.

Alder's useful parts are cones, young catkins (male flowers), young twigs and young leaves. The cones are:

- astringent, that is, drying.

The other parts are also:

- mildly aromatic, that is, warming and drying
- a little bitter, that is, cooling and drying.

The catkins, twigs and young leaves are fairly good for infections and inflammations. I'm not sure if the cones work for infections, except of course locally. (Here, "locally" means either externally or in the alimentary canal.)

Make a tea of the cones: add 10–15 cones to 250 ml water in a pan and bring to a boil. Let simmer about 15 minutes and drink in small sips for diarrhoea, irritable bowel and similar gut problems.

(Chronic bowel problems are often caused by food intolerances. It's best to completely remove the offending food group from your diet.)

Make a tea or a tincture from the catkins, twigs and/or leaves for hay fever. Also give them a try for inflammations, eczema, hard-to-heal wounds and to strengthen the immune and lymphatic systems.

If you cut an alder, the wood soon turns red. The Finnish word for alder, leppä, is an old word for blood.

Avoid alder if you're allergic to alder pollen.



The text on card # 8:

Alnus Mill. • *Betulaceae*, birch family.

Medicinal use: cone, bark, young twig.

Astringent. Make a tea and use it for diarrhoea and similar gut upset with loose stool. For chronic gut upset, remove irritants from the diet.

Medicinal use: catkin (male flower), twig, young leaf.

They strengthen the lymphatic system and are anti-inflammatory.

wild • bush or tree • very common

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The flower of woolly burdock.



Woolly burdock in flower.



Edible flower stalks and leaf stems.

BURDOCK

Burdock is a biennial which likes stony soil. All burdocks can be used interchangeably.

The leaf and seed are bitter, the root is mild and almost sweet. The whole plant is diuretic and thus drying. The bitter parts are also cooling.

Usually, the root of burdock is used. But one doesn't simply dig up a burdock: it's difficult to get your shovel all that deep into the gravel and stones that burdock likes to grow in.

I usually gather the leaf, which is far more diuretic than the root. Cut into 2 cm (1") squares and spread out to dry, or tincture fresh.

Burdock is a biennial. That means that the root of a flowering plant is woody and hard, and the root of a plant in seed is dying. Dig burdocks with nice lush leaf rosettes in fall.

Those with low blood pressure (BP) should be sure to eat enough salt. On the other hand, burdock is a diuretic (and contains potassium) and can lower high BP in people whose high BP responds to diuretics.

Burdock is one of the best herbs for fat digestion, which is why it's used for dry skin and dry eyes. For the skin, use it as a tea, a tincture, an oil or a salve. For the eyes you should also eat fatty fish or take fish oil.

Burdock can help with psoriasis, but as things shouldn't be too simple, it only helps the psoriasis of some people. Give it a try, internally and externally, if you have psoriasis. Also take enough vitamin D and make sure your diet is completely gluten free if you have psoriasis. Bitter herbs strengthen the liver and the digestion. That's why burdock is called a "blood cleanser".

As a wild green, the root, the white part of the flower stalk and the leaf stems are mild. Boil them in water with a pinch of salt and serve them with butter and a dash of lemon.

The text on card # 21:

Arctium L. • Asteraceae, daisy family.

Medicinal use: root, leaf, seed. The root is almost sweet, the leaf and seed are bitter.

Burdock is diuretic (drying) and the leaf and seed are also cooling. Burdock strengthens our fat digestion and is thus one of the best herbs for dry skin.

Food use: the root, the leaf stems and the peeled flower stalks. They're mild and tasty. Boil them with a pinch of salt and serve them with a dash of lemon juice and butter.

wild • biennial • common

<https://www.henriettes-herb.com/articles/herbcards.html>



Daisy family



Asteraceae

Mustard family



Brassicaceae

Amaryllis family



Amaryllidaceae

St. John's wort family



Hypericaceae

Rose family



Rosaceae

Mallow family



Malvaceae

Geranium family



Geraniaceae

Figwort family



Scrophulariaceae

Madder family



Rubiaceae

Burdock



Arctium L. Asteraceae, daisy family.



Use: root, leaf, seed.

The root is almost sweet, the leaf and seed are bitter. Burdock is diuretic (drying) and the leaf and seed are also cooling. Burdock strengthens our fat digestion and is thus one of the best herbs for dry skin.

Use: the root, the leaf stems and the peeled flower stalks. They're mild and tasty. Boil them with a pinch of salt and serve them with a dash of lemon juice and butter.

Card # 21

wild • biennial • common

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Rose



Rosa L. Rosaceae, rose family.



Use: petals.

The petals are aromatic and a little bitter. They contain some mucilage. They're moistening.

Rose is velvet on the inside and thorns on the outside. Use it if you're stressed and if you need love or courage. Take it internally as a tea or as an elixir. Externally, it's great in sugar scrubs, baths, salves and oils.

Use: the hip (berry). It's sour (cooling), and loaded with vitamin C. Use it with nettle in joint problems.

Card # 22

wild/cultivated • bush • common

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Lady's mantle



Alchemilla vulgaris L. Rosaceae, rose family.



Use: leaf, aerial parts.

Lady's mantle is rich in minerals and astringent. It's a great herb for problems in the pelvic organs and can be used in pregnancy. Take it regularly if you suffer from fibroids.

Use it as a tea if you are recovering from influenza or an operation.

Use: the leaf. Young leaf can be added to salads, older leaf is useful in green powder.

Card # 23

wild • perennial • common

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Mallow



Malva L. Malvaceae, mallow family.



Use: leaf, flower, aerial parts.

Mallows are mucilaginous and thus cooling and moistening.

Use them to soothe inflamed mucous membranes, for instance in the gut, the urinary tract or the airways.

Use it as a tea. Regular use can help moisten dry people.

Use: leaf and flower. Mallow is a mild addition to salads and gives body to herbal teas. Freeze the flowers in ice cubes for summery drinks.

Card # 24

wild/cultivated • annual/perennial • common

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The book *Practical Herb Cards* consists of text and herb cards. The cards contain condensed information about medicinal herbs (including some spices, fruits and vegetables) and a few important terms.

The text gives a little more information, with some recipes and a wealth of photos.

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Henriette Kress has written several books about medicinal herbs.

She has been a practising herbalist for decades and runs one of the world's oldest and largest herb sites:
<http://www.henriettes-herb.com> .