

Boldo Herb Profile

Also known as

Peumus boldus, Boldea fragrans, Boldine, Boldoak Boldea, Boldo Folium, Boldus, Boldus Boldus, Peumus fragrans.

Introduction

Boldo is an evergreen native to Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru. Archaeologists excavating in the Monte Verde region of southern Chile have found boldo in combination with 22 other herbs wrapped in a seaweed basket estimated to be 12,500 years old. The scientists believe that herbal combination was used for pain relief in the severely injured or those needing surgery. The German E Commission reports that boldo increases gastric secretions and has antispasmodic properties. Other contemporary studies show promising results as an anti-inflammatory and as a fever reducer. The Spanish conquistadors observed the Incan natives using boldo leaves as a spice and as a digestif to ease the digestion of large meals. The Incas also used the herb to treat problems of the bladder and prostate. In the 1870's, boldo was introduced to doctors in the US and UK as a treatment for bladder, liver, and stomach discomforts, and has a nervine, or mild sedative.

Constituents

Alkaloids (boldine) and flavonoids, as well as ascaridole, camphor, cineole, linalool, limonene, b-pinene, rhamnetin, isorhamnetin, kaempferol, resin, and tannins.

Parts Used

Dried leaf.

Typical Preparations

Teas and infusions, or as a capsule or extract.

Summary

Boldo leaves are used to treat bladder and urinary tract infections, gallbladder discomfort, gallstones, heartburn, and mild stomach cramps. The herb works by encouraging the release of bile, dissolving fats, but also by increasing intestinal transit time, that is, giving the digestive tract more time to digest food. The ascaridole attacks intestinal worms. Chilean folk medicine used it as an anthelmintic against worms; this has been attributed to the ascoridole content found in the oil produced by the leaves. The leaves are used to this day as a seasoning in Chilean cooking. The essential oil is used in the perfume industry. It is also an ingredient in liqueurs and bitters.

Precautions

Don't use if there is severe liver disease or obstruction of the bile ducts. Seek advice from a practitioner if you have/had liver or kidney disease.

Botanical: Peumus Boldus (MOLINA)

Family: N.O. Monimiaceae

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---**Synonyms**---Boldu. Boldus. Boldoa Fragrans.

---**Part Used**---The leaves.

---**Habitat**---Chile.

---Description---An evergreen shrub growing in the fields of the Andes in Chile, where its yellowish-green fruit is eaten, its bark used for tanning, and its wood utilized in charcoalmaking.

Leaves are opposite, sessile, about 2 inches long entire, and colour when dried red brown, coriaceous, prominent midrib, a number of small glands on their surface. Odour peculiar, when crushed very strongly disagreeable, not unlike oil of *Chenopodium* (wormseed). The leaves contain about 2 per cent on distillation of an aromatic volatile oil, chemically related to oil of *Chenopodium*.

A peculiar alkaloid called Boldine has been found in the leaves and when injected hyperdermically, paralyses both motor and sensory nerves, also the muscle fibres. When given internally, in toxic doses, it causes great excitement, exaggerates the reflexes and the respiratory movements, increases diuresis, causes cramp and convulsions ending in death from centric respiratory paralysis, the heart continuing to beat long after respiration ceases. Of late years Boldine has been largely used in veterinary practice for jaundice.

---Constituents---Boldo leaves contain about 2 per cent of volatile oil, in which, in addition to terpenes, terpineol has been detected. They also contain the bitter alkaloid Boldine and the glucoside Boldin or Boldoglucin.

---Medicinal Action and Uses---Tonic, antiseptic, stimulant. Useful in chronic hepatic torpor. The oil in 5-drop doses has been found useful in genito-urinary inflammation. Has long been recognized in South America as a valuable cure for gonorrhoea.

---Preparations---Tincture of Boldo, B.P.C., used as a diuretic. Dose, 10 to 40 minims. Fluid extract, 1/4 to 1/2 drachm.

---Other Species---The Australian tree *Monimia rotundifolia* contains an oil rather similar, which may be safely substituted for Boldo.