

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Common Names: Pot marigold and pot calendula.

Location: This herb is native to Mediterranean parts of the world, but can be found throughout the world.

Description: This herb grows yellow and orange flower petals that are used medicinally.

Properties: Calendula can be used to fight bacteria and ease pain. It is also an anti-inflammatory.

Uses: Use calendula to fight allergies, conjunctivitis, gastritis, bowel disease, skin disorders, and to break through mucus membranes.

Doses: You can find calendula in eye drops, teas, creams, and tinctures. Do not use calendula teas for more than two weeks at a time.

Warnings: This herb can potentially cause anxiety and insomnia when ingested. Do not take other drowsy medications at the same time as calendula.

Also known as

Calendula officinalis, pot marigold, Garden Marigold, Gold-Bloom, Holligold, Marigold, Marybud, Zergul.

Introduction

The calendula is an annual flower native to the northern Mediterranean countries. Its name refers to its tendency to bloom with the calendar, usually once a month or every new moon. The term "marigold" refers to the Virgin Mary, and marigolds are used in Catholic events honoring the Virgin Mary. The Egyptians considered them to have rejuvenating properties. In the Hindu world, the flowers were used to adorn statues of gods in their temples, as well as a colorant in food, fabrics, and cosmetics, and of particular interest, in the 18th and 19th century calendula was used to color cheese. The calendula was originally used as food rather than as an herb. It adds flavor to cereals, rice, and soups. The petals can be added to salads. As recently as 70 years ago, American physicians used calendula to treat amenorrhea, conjunctivitis, fevers, cuts, scrapes, bruises, and burns, as well as minor infections of the skin.

Constituents

Calendulin, beta-carotene and other carotenoids, isoquercitrin, narcissin, rutin, amyryl, lupeol, sterols, and volatile oils. The flowers also contain complex polysaccharides with immunostimulant properties.

Parts Used

Dried flowers.

Typical Preparations

Creams, teas, tinctures, infusions, compresses, and washes.

Summary

Calendula creams and washes are still used to disinfect minor wounds and to treat infections of the skin. The antibacterial and immunostimulant properties of the plant make it extremely useful in treating slow-healing cuts and cuts in people who have compromised immune systems. The herb stimulates the production of collagen at wound sites and minimizes scarring. Gargling calendula water may ease sore throat. Because of the vivid and brilliant color of calendula, it was thought by many to possess many powers for the protection and benefit of humans. One of the more outlandish claims was that wearing an amulet or necklace made of calendula petals, a bay leaf, and a wolf's tooth would ensure that any words spoken to the wearer would be kind, peaceful and honest. An often overlooked application of this herb is the treatment of post-mastectomy lymphedema. The herb will not reduce swelling, but it will reduce pain.

Precautions

None.

Botanical: *Calendula officinalis* (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Compositae

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---**Synonyms**---Caltha officinalis. Golds. Ruddes. Mary Gowles. Oculus Christi. Pot Marigold. Marygold. Fiore d'ogni mese. Solis Sponsa.

---**Parts Used**---Flowers, herb, leaves.

The Common Marigold is familiar to everyone, with its pale-green leaves and golden orange flowers. It is said to be in bloom on the calends of every month, hence its Latin name, and one of the names by which it is known in Italy - *fiore d'ogni mese* - countenances this derivation. It was not named after the Virgin, its name being a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon *merso-meargealla*, the Marsh Marigold. Old English authors called it Golds or Ruddes. It was, however, later associated with the Virgin Mary, and in the seventeenth century with Queen Mary.

---**History**---It was well known to the old herbalists as a garden-flower and for use in cookery and medicine. Dodoens-Lyte (*A Niewe Herbal*, 1578) says:

'It hath pleasant, bright and shining yellow flowers, the which do close at the setting downe of the sunne, and do spread and open againe at the sunne rising.'

Linnaeus assigned a narrower limit to the expansion of its flowers, observing that they are open from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon. This regular expansion and closing of the flowers attracted early notice, and hence the plant acquired the names of *solsequia* and *solis sponsa*. There is an allusion to this peculiarity in the poems of Rowley:

'The Mary-budde that shooteth (shutteth) with the light.'

And in the *Winter's Tale*:

'The Marigold that goes to bed wi' th' sun,
And with him rises weeping.'

It has been cultivated in the kitchen garden for the flowers, which are dried for broth, and said to comfort the heart and spirits.

Fuller writes: 'We all know the many and sovereign virtues in your leaves, the Herbe Generale in all pottage.' (*Antheologie*, 1655.)

Stevens, in *Maison Rustique, or the Countrie Farme* (1699), mentions the Marigold as a specific for headache, jaundice, red eyes, toothache and ague. The dried flowers are still used among the peasantry 'to strengthen and comfort the hart.' He says further:

'Conserve made of the flowers and sugar, taken in the morning fasting, cureth the trembling of the harte, and is also given in the time of plague or pestilence. The yellow leaves of the flowers are dried and kept throughout Dutchland against winter to put into broths, physicall potions and for divers other purposes, in such quantity that in some Grocers or Spicesellers are to be found barrels filled with them and retailed by the penny or less, insomuch that no broths are well made without dried Marigold.'

Formerly its flowers were used to give cheese a yellow colour.

In Macer's *Herbal* it is stated that only to look on Marigolds will draw evil humours out of the head and strengthen the eyesight.

'Golde [Marigold] is bitter in savour
Fayr and zelw [yellow] is his flowur
Ye golde flour is good to sene
It makyth ye syth bryth and clene
Wyscely to lokyn on his flowres
Drawyth owt of ye heed wikked hirores
[humours].
.....
Loke wyscely on golde erly at morwe [morning]
Yat day fro feures it schall ye borwe:
Ye odour of ye golde is good to smelle.'

'It must be taken only when the moon is in the Sign of the Virgin and not when Jupiter is in the ascendant, for then the herb loses its virtue. And the gatherer, who must be out of deadly sin, must say three Pater Nosters and three Aves. It will give the wearer a vision of anyone who has robbed him.'

From Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's *Old English Herbals*:

'Of marygold we learn that Summe use to make theyr here yelow with the floure of this herbe, not beyng contet with the naturall colour which God hath geven the.'

Gerard speaks of:

'The fruitful or much-bearing marigold, . . . is likewise called Jackanapes-on-horsebacke: it hath leaves stalkes and roots like the common sort of marigold, differing in the shape of his floures; for this plant doth bring forth at the top of the stalke one floure like the other marigolds, from which start forth sundry other small floures, yellow likewise and of the same fashion as the first; which if I be not deceived commeth to pass per accidens, or by chance, as Nature often times liketh to play with other flowers; or as children are borne with two thumbes on one hande or such like; which living to be men do get children like unto others: even so is the seed of this Marigold, which if it be sowen it brings forth not one floure in a thousand like the plant from whence it was taken.'

Culpepper says it is a:

'herb of the Sun, and under Leo. They strengthen the heart exceedingly, and are very expulsive, and a little less effectual in the smallpox and measles than saffron. The juice of Marigold leaves mixed with vinegar, and any hot swelling bathed with it, instantly gives ease, and assuages it. The flowers, either green or dried, are much used in possets, broths, and drink, as a comforter of the heart and spirits, and to expel any malignant or pestilential quality which might annoy them. A plaister made with the dry flowers in powder, hog's-grease, turpentine, and rosin, applied to the breast, strengthens and succours the heart infinitely in fevers, whether pestilential or not.'

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---Cultivation---The Marigold is a native of south Europe, but perfectly hardy in this country, and easy to grow. Seeds sown in April, in any soil, in sunny, or half-sunny places germinate freely. They require no other cultivation but to keep them clean from weeds and to thin out where too close, leaving them 9 to 10 inches apart, so that their branches may have room to spread. The plants will begin to flower in June, and continue flowering until the frost kills them. They will increase from year to year, if allowed to seed themselves. The seeds ripen in August and September, and if permitted to scatter will furnish a supply of young plants in the spring.

Only the common deep orange-flowered variety is of medicinal value.

---Parts Used---The flowers and leaves.

Leaves. - Gather only in fine weather, in the morning, after the dew has been dried by the sun. *Flowers.* - The ray florets are used and need quick drying in the shade, in a good current of warm air, spread out on sheets of paper, loosely, without touching each other, or they will become discoloured.

---Medicinal Action and Uses---Marigold is chiefly used as a local remedy. Its action is stimulant and diaphoretic. Given internally, it assists local action and prevents suppuration. The infusion of 1 ounce to a pint of boiling water is given internally, in doses of a tablespoonful, and externally as a local application. It is useful in chronic ulcer, varicose veins, etc. Was considered formerly to have much value as an aperient and detergent in visceral obstructions and jaundice.

It has been asserted that a Marigold flower, rubbed on the affected part, is an admirable remedy for the pain and swelling caused by the sting of a wasp or bee. A lotion made from the flowers is most useful for sprains and wounds, and a water distilled from them is good for inflamed and sore eyes.

An infusion of the freshly-gathered flowers is employed in fevers, as it gently promotes perspiration and throws out any eruption - a decoction of the flowers is much in use in country districts to bring out smallpox and measles, in the same manner as Saffron. Marigold flowers are in demand for children's ailments.

The leaves when chewed at first communicate a viscid sweetness, followed by a strong penetrating taste, of a saline nature. The expressed juice, which contains the greater part of this pungent matter, has been given in cases of costiveness and proved very efficacious. Snuffed up the nose it excites sneezing and a discharge of mucous from the head.

The leaves, eaten as a salad, have been considered useful in the scrofula of children, and the acrid qualities of the plant have caused it to be recommended as an extirpator of warts.

A yellow dye has also been extracted from the flower, by boiling.

---Preparations and Dosage---Fluid extract, 1/4 to 1 drachm.