

Damiana (*Turnera diffusa*)

Location: This herb can be found in Mexico, Texas, Namibia and Central America.

Description: The leaves of the damiana herb are used for medicinal purposes.

Properties: Damiana has been used throughout the centuries to treat impotence, regulate sexual hormones in women, and stimulate nerves, genitals, blood circulation, and metabolism.

Uses: Use damiana to improve reproductive health, and to treat depression, reduced sex drive, impotence, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and urinary tract infections.

Doses: You can find this herb in capsules, tinctures and dried herb form. When you ingest damiana, take a teaspoon of lemon juice as well.

Warnings: If you have diabetes, avoid the use of this herb without proper consultations and supervision.

## Damiana Leaf and Powder Profile

### Also known as

*Turnera diffusa*. *Turnera aphrodisiaca* has the same medicinal properties, whereas *Turnera ulmifolia* looks the same but has a different chemistry. Damiana aphrodisiaca, Herba de la Pastora, Mexican Damiana, Mizibcoc, Old Woman's Broom, Rosemary, *Turnerae diffusae folium*, *Turnerae diffusae herba*, *Turnera microphyllia*.

### Introduction

Damiana is a small shrub reaching a height of 4 to 6 feet (1-2 meters), bearing sweet-smelling, serrated leaves growing 4 to 10 inches (10-25 cm) long. Small, yellow flowers bloom in summer and are followed by small fruits with a fig-like taste. The Greeks named it *aphrodisiakos*, and it was known as the "goddess of love". The Mayas and Aztecs used damiana as an aphrodisiac, and also as a general tonic to improve health. They also used to smoke it for relaxation, as well as burning it during ceremonies to induce "visions". Currently, it is made into a liqueur in Mexico that is quite popular. The herb has historically been considered more important for focusing sexual energies than for creating them. Damiana has been popularly used across the Southwestern United States and Mexico as an aphrodisiac and for asthma, bronchitis, neurosis, diabetes, dysentery, dyspepsia, headaches, paralysis, nephrosis, spermatorrhea, stomachache, and syphilis. The current edition of the British Herbal Pharmacopoeia recommends the herb for "anxiety neurosis with a predominant sexual factor, depression, nervous dyspepsia, atonic constipation, and coital inadequacy." Damiana has earned a reputation as a treatment for erectile dysfunction, especially when the problem has strong emotional content.

### Constituents

The leaves contain up to 1% volatile oil consisting of 1,8-cineole, p-cymene, alpha- and beta-pinene, thymol, alpha-copaene, and calamene among other chemicals. The dry matter of the leaf includes a characteristic brown, bitter substance called damianin as well as tannins, flavonoids, beta-sitosterol, and the glycosides gonzalitosin, arbutin, and tetracyllin B

## Parts Used

Leaf and leaf stems, dried.

## Typical Preparations

May be blended with other herbs as a tea blend, as the taste of it alone is rather bitter. It may also be compounded into an elixer, as a capsule and in extract form

## Summary

Damiana is a popular aphrodisiac for men. The alkaloids contained within damiana stimulate blood flow to the genital area thereby increasing sensitivity; some even people report feelings of euphoria. It has also been traditionally used by numerous people for the purpose of enhancing orgasms in women, and for asthma, depression, digestive problems, and menstrual disorders. Two US patents list damiana as an ingredient in a "thermogenic" diet aid designed to increase metabolic rate.

## Precautions

Teas of damiana may lower blood sugars, but tinctures do not. Since one of the traditional uses of the herb was to induce abortion, it should be avoided in pregnancy.

**Botanical: *Turnera aphrodisiaca* (WILLD.)**

**Family: N.O. Turneraceae**

- [Description](#)
- [Medicinal Action and Uses](#)
- [Prepartions](#)
- [Other Species](#)

**---Part Used---**Leaves.

**---Habitat---**Mexico, South Arnerica, Texas, West Indies.

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**---Description---**A small shrub; leaves smooth and pale green on upper side, underneath glabrous, with a few hairs on the ribs, ovolanceolate, shortly petiolate with two small glands at base; flowers yellow, rising singly from axils of the leaves, capsule one-celled splitting into three pieces; smell aromatic, taste characteristic, bitterish, aromatic and resinous.

**---Constituents---**A greenish volatile oil, smelling like chamomile, amorphous bitter principle Damianin, resins and tannin.

**---Medicinal Action and Uses---**Mild purgative, diuretic, tonic, acting directly on the reproductive organs, stimulant, hypochondriastic, aphrodisiae.

**---Preparations---**Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm. Solid extract, 5 to 10 grains. Often combined with Nux Vomica, Phosphorus, etc.

**---Other Species---**

*Turnera opifera* leaves are used as an infusion and given as an astringent and tonic by the natives of Brazil, also *T. ulmifolia* for its tonic and expectorant properties.

*Aplopappus discoideus* was formerly sold as Damiana, but can easily be detected, as the leaves are distinctly lanceolate, with only two or three teeth on either side.