

Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)

Common Names: Lady's purse, mother's heart, shepherd's bag.

Location: Shepherd's purse is a weed in the same plant family as broccoli, cabbage, and mustard.

Description: It is a biennial with an erect stem, a rosette of basal leaves, four-petaled white flowers, and heart-shaped seedpods. Its name derives from the appearance of the seed pods, which resemble small purses.

Properties: All parts of the aerial (above ground) parts of the plant are used in herbal medicine.

Uses: Shepherd's purse is considered by herbalists to be one of the best herbs for stopping bleeding of all kinds, both external and internal, from superficial cuts and scrapes to internal bleeding of the stomach, the lungs, and especially the kidneys and urinary tract. It is prescribed mostly for slowing or stopping excessive menstrual bleeding and other uterine problems. Studies have shown that shepherd's purse has anti-inflammatory, diuretic, and anti-ulcer properties. It decreases blood pressure in lab tests. Traditional Chinese medicine uses shepherd's purse to "brighten vision." It contains high concentrations of potassium and vitamin C, nutrients critical to the maintenance of vascular health in the retina. For specific health conditions, shepherd's purse is used for menstrual problems and nosebleeds.

Doses: Shepherd's purse is used as tincture or tea, as well as in poultices.

Warnings: During pregnancy, it should only be used at full term or under medical supervision. Using it for spotting during pregnancy is not recommended. Any vaginal bleeding during pregnancy requires medical attention. If bleeding from other sources persists more than three days or becomes greater during treatment with the herb, consult a physician.