

# Wild Comfrey

*Symphytum officinale*  
Also known as 'bone-knit'

Hopefully much of the following article about Comfrey is practical knowledge or soon on the way to being so for our grandchildren!

Comfrey originates in Asia and Europe. This elegant wild gypsy plant now grows worldwide, and is hugely medicinal and nourishing. In the same family taxonomically as Borage, Comfrey has slightly hairy leaves and is able to grow in all types of soil. Comfrey is a perennial herb with thick roots, a bristly-haired hollow stem and large tapering leaves. Its bell-like flowers are pinky-purple and emerge in the summer months.

Besides being extremely edible (comfrey leaves are delicious in soups etc) and nutritious (contains an abundance of minerals, many more than in most leafy greens found in the grocery store), the specific healing properties of this plant are tremendous.

Comfrey holds the image of the human nervous system in its DNA, making it an excellent plant for those to take who would like to heal the nerves. For instance, those with the shakes of any kind, or any nervous system afflictions such as shingles, or the herpes virus in any form would benefit greatly from taking Comfrey.

Comfrey helps repair and prevent damage to the memory neurons in our brain. This plant specifically helps with short term memory loss and can work very well with Ginkgo to help prevent neurological disease. Comfrey contains special proteins needed for the formation of short-term cells.

Comfrey is also a respiratory system healer. Comfrey literally helps us to breathe in more oxygen by optimizing our lung capacity.

Indeed Comfrey will help heal all mucous membranes of the body. Comfrey will heal ulcers, and is very useful in cases of colitis and IBS as well. If you have cracked gums, a raw throat, stomach or your intestinal membranes are in need of some healing and soothing over, Comfrey is the plant you are looking for.

Consuming Comfrey leaves over the years will keep your face wrinkle-free and skin and scalp supple.

A friend once put a piece of the root of Comfrey through the washing machine, planted it, and it still grew fine! Comfrey is an abundant source of allantoin, a specific precursor to a hormone that facilitates abundant cell growth.

Basically, Comfrey nurtures cell growth and proliferation on all levels- ie promotes the healing of all tissues, including ligaments, skin, cartilage, muscle and knits bones as well. The other year a friend sustained a knee injury that had

damaged the cartilage. She did poultices every day for a month with ginger and comfrey, and had great healing results. The plants worked wonderfully together and the cartilage actually regrew and healed.

One of the best forms of taking Comfrey is in an infusion form.

To prepare an infusion a preserving jar is filled  $\frac{1}{4}$  way full with dried plant material (dried leaves and flowering tops) and boiling water poured over the top in the evening.

Wait a minute or two and make sure it is filled right to the top to ensure no air, no oxygen gets in. Cover with the top and steep overnight. In the morning strain the solution and give plant material back to the earth, giving thanks. The infusion can then be refrigerated and drunk hot or cold as you prefer, drink about 2-3 cups/day. Even when refrigerated infusions are so mineral rich they will start fermenting; they last about 2-3 days.

I have found Comfrey to be extremely effective as a cream or ointment as an anti-cancer treatment, it is very effective used before or after the application of bloodroot paste or just on its own over a period of a couple of months. Comfrey is a skin healer of all sorts, healing for eczema and other itchy flaky skin conditions, and is also excellent as a blister salve.

Comfrey, taken inside and out, prevents bad scarring and heals all kinds of connective tissue.

The major constituent of Comfrey is mucilage. Other constituents include allantoin, polyphenols, amino acids, phytosterols, triterpenoids, saccharides, and pyrrolizidine alkaloids. The major unsaturated pyrrolizidine alkaloids in comfrey are lycopsamine, intermedine, 7-acetyllycopsamine, 7-acetylintermedine, and symphytine. Comfrey is an abundant source of minerals and is an impressive source of potassium, calcium, vitamins A and C. This is only a very brief overview of some of the very nourishing minerals and vitamins that Comfrey contains.

As mentioned above, Comfrey contains something called pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are concentrated in the roots especially during the winter. These alkaloids can be hard to metabolize by the liver and can cause nausea and adverse reactions, especially if the liver is already compromised- for instance from alcohol or drug abuse. Contrary to popular belief about Comfrey, the plant itself is generally NOT poisonous, the only thing is to be aware and not eat or drink the roots during the winter. If you would like to be extra careful, avoid the roots all the time and just consume the leaves as they are always gentle and very healing anyways.

This plant continues to be scapegoated in different ways. For instance, currently in New Zealand the government councils country wide still have orders from DOC (Department of Conservation) to spray this plant with toxic chemicals (such as glyphosate) on sight.

Comfrey has been used since ancient times for even more purposes than have already been discussed. The plant has been used in the treatment of sciatica, boils, rheumatism, varicose veins, bed sores, insect bites, tumours, gangrene,

indigestion, stomach and bowel problems, for lowering blood pressure, excessive menstrual flow, bleeding gums and haemorrhaging. Comfrey has also been used for thyroid disorders, diarrhea, and to ease inflammation of the joints and mucous membranes. The plant has a long history of use for **lung** conditions and whooping cough. A preparation called comfrey mucilage, made by soaking the root in distilled water, simmering, filtering, and adding honey and glycerin, was (and still is) an effective remedy for lung ailments.

Comfrey is said to carry the powers of safety during travel and money. If you wore or carried Comfrey this was believed to ensure your safety while on the move. To protect suitcases from being stolen, comfrey was tucked into packed bags.

Comfrey is one of the biggest plant healers we have on the Earth. It needs to be cherished in modern day medicine because it is so powerful. We need to take note and realize that when we respect this plant, and use it wisely, the healing that can be effected is infinite.

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She is the founder of PlantRhythms, a range of NZ local wild herbs and Native tree medicinal products for our health and wellbeing. [www.plantrhythms.com](http://www.plantrhythms.com).

#### References/Further information

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