

Herb of the Month: Goldenseal

Native to North America, Goldenseal Root (*Hydrastis canadensis*) belongs to the Buttercup family though its leaves and fruit somewhat resemble those of the raspberry bush. It is a small perennial herb, with a horizontal, irregularly knotted, bright yellow rootstock, giving off slender roots below and marked with scars from the flower stems of the previous years. The flowering stem, which is pushed up early in the spring, is from 6 to 12 inches high, erect, and cylindrical with downward pointing hairs. This hairy stem bears two wrinkled dark green hairy leaves placed high up and one solitary radical leaf on the rootstalk which, when full grown, reaches 9 inches across. The flower is produced in April and is small with three greenish-white clusters. The fruit is a small, oblong, crimson berry containing one or two hard, black shiny seeds. It is ripe in July and has a similar appearance to a raspberry, but is not edible. In the wild, Goldenseal used to grow abundantly until over-harvesting (wild crafting) caused it to be put on the endangered species list. This plant is extremely finicky about where it likes to grow, but organic farmers have over the years learned what its needs consist of and are now harvesting medicinal-quality yields. Farmers let the plant grow for 2 to 3 years before harvesting the root in the fall after the seeds have matured. It is now slowly making a comeback in its natural forest habitat. It has been known by many different names: yellow root, puccoon root, Indian dye, eye root, Jaundice root and Warner (its common English name).

The Native American Indians had multiple uses for Goldenseal root. The Cherokees for instance, used the roots and rhizomes to treat skin diseases, relieve sore eyes, for face and body paint, and also to dye clothes and weapons. The Native people shared their medicinal plant knowledge with European settlers.

Goldenseal contains calcium, iron, manganese, vitamin A, C, E, B-complex, and other nutrients and minerals. The main constituents of *Hydrastis* root are the alkaloids berberine, hydrastine, and canadine. Berberine gives Goldenseal root its yellow coloring and bitter flavor and has been found to be anti-microbial. Hydrastine is a peculiar crystalline substance helpful as an anti-inflammatory, and canadine consists of resin, albumin, starch, fatty matter, sugar, lignin

and a small quantity of volatile oil, which gives Goldenseal its distinct earthy aroma.

Goldenseal root is helpful for fighting infections of all kinds and in some herbal circles is considered to have natural anti-biotic properties. Because of this it is suggested to take probiotics when taking this herb for a period of time. It dries and cleanses mucus membranes, is traditionally used for liver diseases such as cirrhosis and hepatitis and is generally used for digestive and inflammation issues, often combined with other alteratives

(blood purifiers) such as echinacea, garlic, myrrh, and chaparral. This herb is also helpful and effective in fighting against flu viruses, bacterial infections, yeast infections, fungal out-brakes, and also protozoan and amoebic issues such as giardia.

We carry Goldenseal root in many forms throughout our supplement and bodycare department. Come in and see what is available.