

# Native Texas Herbs

September 29, 2016 By [Ellen Zimmermann](#)

**Echinacea**, *Echinacea purpurea*, the Purple Coneflower. A beautiful, stately, landscape and medicinal plant, *Echinacea purpurea*, as well as *Echinacea angustifolia* and *Echinacea pallida* are presently in danger of losing their wild habitat, and are becoming less plentiful and available



in the wild as they once were. *Echinacea*, as many of you already know, is an herb that is used to boost your immune system. You can use *Echinacea* as a preventative; i.e. when traveling to avoid getting sick, and to assist your own healthy immune system in fighting a cold, flu or infection. The root, flower, leaves and seed of the *Echinacea* plant can be used as a tea or tincture and the medicine tingles in your mouth while making its magic. Try some of my [Extra Echinacea Tincture](#) which takes 6 months to prepare and is powerful and effective. Scatter fresh seeds in October or plant transplants of this perennial herb in full to part-sun.

**Slippery Elm**, *Ulmus rubra*. I have seen Slippery Elm growing along creeks and streams here in Austin. The inner bark of the trunk is harvested and used as a soothing remedy for inflammation. The strong demulcent properties of this herb make it useful for gastro-intestinal irritation and for the throat and lungs. It can be used externally as a poultice for ulcers and abscesses and its highly nutritional value make it useful as a food during convalescence. A small sapling can be planted in your yard and nurtured as a lovely shade tree. I've planted two saplings into the ground and the one that is growing in my garden is at least 20 feet high and gorgeous.



Commonly called **Butterfly Weed** (as it is a favorite home to the Monarch butterfly), or Pleurisy Root, *Asclepius tuberosa* is a spectacular flower, and sadly, “At-Risk” in the wild. We can easily grow Butterfly Weed from seed, sown in the fall, or it can be propagated from root cuttings. This showy Milkweed is used as a diaphoretic (promotes sweating), antispasmodic, expectorant and a tonic. As one of its common names indicates, it was often used for pleurisy and lung and bronchial congestion.

Another local **milkweed** I love is Immortal, AKA, **Antelope Horns**, *Asclepius asperula*, which grows wild on my front property where it is dry and the soil is shallow. It seems to thrive hardily



and is used medicinally. Mid-wives use *Asclepius asperula*, to facilitate childbirth. According to Herbalist, Michael Moore, the aerial part of the plant is good for the Respiratory System and also helpful for the heart. This plant is elusive and oh so beautiful!! Look at it closely.



**Agarita**, *Mahonia trifoliolata*. This common wild plant grows abundantly in fields, meadows and wooded areas. The stems and bright yellow root of the herb are known for their anti-viral and digestive properties, as it is high in berberine. The tasty red berries are used to make a delicious jam. The Native Americans used it for toothaches. EZ Herbs now carries fresh **Agarita Tincture** made from freshly harvested branches. Great for digestive health and liver support.

**Cedar**, *Juniperus ashei*. This prevalent hardwood tree has useful blue berries that act as a urinary antiseptic. It can also be used for indigestion, colic and flatulence. Eating one juniper berry a day prior to cedar fever season can help ease the uncomfortable symptoms of Cedar Fever.

## **Purslane**

Purslane also goes by these names: duckweed, little hogweed, and pursley. There may be many different local names used to refer to purslane because people from different cultures and communities included purslane in their regular diet.

So what parts are edible? You can eat the stems, leaves, and flower buds. Even the seeds have their use – the Aboriginal Australians use them to make seed cakes.

If you haven't had purslane, you might be wondering: what does it taste like? The answer is slightly sour and salty. Some say it has a lemony flavor. This is why purslane is great with other vegetables, greens, and herbs like spinach, oregano, and arugula leaves; with food complimenting the taste of purslanes like feta cheese, poached eggs, tomatoes, lentils, peas, potatoes, bacon, lemons, even with yogurt and rice; with ingredients that drive flavor in a dish like onions, garlic, black pepper, chives, scallions, butter, leeks, and red pepper; and used alongside liquids that brings out the best in purslane taste-wise, like olive oil, white vinegar, chicken stock, and Dijon mustard. Fresh purslane is crunchy, and many people eat it raw and fresh. Others eat it with bread or use it as an ingredient in a dish.

It is delicious. It is healthy. It is enjoyable to eat because of its texture. But is there anyone who should avoid it? Yes, particularly those who are susceptible to developing kidney stones by eating purslane which has high oxalic acid content.

### **Storage:**

If you want to refrigerate purslane, use a plastic bag and make sure to close the bag before putting it in the refrigerator. This way, the purslane will stay in good condition for several days. You can also freeze it using a freezer bag, but you cannot use it for salad. The best use for frozen purslane is for soups.

### **Cooking:**

People enjoy eating purslane as a very versatile leaf vegetable. The most common use of purslane is on salads. It is also used in making stir-fry dishes, soups (like *palpina* soup in Kurdistan or *sopa de beldroegas* in the Alentejo region of Portugal) and stews, casserole, and baked pastries. Some just boil it, that's it! Purslane is an excellent substitute for spinach or watercress.

### **Nutritional Benefits:**

Purslane contains carbohydrates, protein, calories, vitamin E, vitamin C, and dietary minerals. Purslane is the richest vegetable source of alpha-linolenic acid, an essential omega-3 fatty acid. A 2016 [article](#) by The Gazette describes purslane as the vegetable with the highest Omega-3 content.



<https://www.gardeningaustin.com/blog/purslane-my-favorite-weed> VERY GOOD ARTICLE/INFO

# Dynamic Dozen Plus One Ellen Zimmermann

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**Mullein, *Verbascum thapsus*.** Often found growing wild, this common plant's leaves are excellent in the relief of lung congestion, asthma, bronchitis and sore throats. Its yellow flowers are often combined with garlic and used as infused oil to treat ear infections. Also called "Cowboy Toilet paper"



**Aloe *Aloe vera, spp.*** Known as the "Plant of Immortality", this ancient and wonderful herb has numerous uses for burns, cuts and wounds. Aloe is also used internally as a laxative and for digestive problems.



**Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*.** This delicious culinary herb (great with poultry and potatoes), is used to stimulate poor circulation. Rosemary is useful in treating headaches, improving memory and act as a digestive herb to stimulate the flow of bile.





**Yarrow, *Achillea millifolium*.** The leaves of this plant will stop bleeding and begin healing in just seconds. Yarrow can also be used as a tea to reduce fever and to promote perspiration. A sprig of yarrow in your car visor will keep you safe as you drive. A remarkable plant!!

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**Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*.** This easily grown perennial is used to calm night-time headaches, nervous tension and acts as an anti-depressant. Like other mints, it is used to treat upset stomachs, flatulence and colic.



**Calendula, *Calendula officinalis*.** This versatile herb's brilliant yellow/orange flowers are used in many salves for their emollient, anti-inflammatory and healing properties. It's easy to grow from seed when planted in the fall.

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**Passionflower, *Passiflora Incarnata*.** This easily grown climber's leaves and flowers are used as an anti-anxiety medication. Its non-addictive sedative properties treat insomnia, can reduce high blood pressure and acts as a pain killer.



**Comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*.** Also known as Knitbone, Comfrey contains chemical constituents that help heal bones, ligaments, sprains and skin. It is an easily grown perennial herb for part-shade.



**Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*.** Echinacea is an astringent herb used to enhance and build your Immune System. As a blood purifier, Echinacea is used to increase the body's resistance to infection.



**Garden Sage, *Salvia officinalis*.** This common garden plant's leaves are used to soothe sore throats and treat infected gums. This herb's strong astringent action helps to slow secretions of fluids; such as excessive sweating, vaginal discharge, milk flow and diarrhea.

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**Horehound, *Marrubium vulgare*.** This very bitter herb is used to treat coughs and lung congestion. It can induce perspiration and is safely used for children. A popular way to take horehound is by eating horehound candy.

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**Chaste Tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*.** The medicinal berries are used to treat PMS and menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes and excessive bleeding. As a hormonal balancer, Vitex regulates progesterone and estrogen, treats fibroids and re-establishes normal ovulation and menstruation.





**Rose, *Rosa, spp.*** is not just a beautiful flower but a helpful cosmetic and medicinal herb. Fresh Rose petals are used in my moisturizing cream and astringent spray for its emollient and soothing properties. Fresh, organic Antique Rose petals are also helpful in a tincture as a mood-elevator, anti-depressant and for bringing the essence of Rose to your soul.

## **Really “Weeds” ? Chickweed and Cleavers, two great Herbs!**

February 1, 2016 By [Ellen Zimmermann](#)

I have been thinking a lot about our spring “weeds”. They are not weeds. They are plants that we don’t know the use of yet. Or another explanation, they are plants that we do not want in our gardens. Needless to say these little, tenacious plants love to overtake an area for a short time, especially in the spring. They are to be noticed, understood and then harvested for medicinal preparations. At this very moment my yard is a carpet of Chickweed, *Stellaria media*, and my garden is filling up with Cleavers, *Galium aparine*. I really love both of these plants, as they are useful medicinals, as well as nutritional additions to your diet with some practical uses as well. Read on and learn about my green friends, Chickweed and Cleavers.



I've never planted Chickweed, but it comes up in the planter box and in various pots on my deck. I also see it growing abundantly in the backyard, thick and lush. Like Cleavers, Chickweed is an early spring tonic and can be eaten fresh in salads, combined with Dandelion greens, steamed or sautéed as any other green, or just munched on by itself. It is quite nutritious, containing protein and many minerals, some including Zinc, Magnesium, Manganese, Silicon and Iron.

Chickweed is used medicinally as a Urinary demulcent and a diuretic. It can be used externally for skin irritations, itch and rashes. Hence it is an important ingredient in my [Scratch No More Salve](#), This salve is very effective, safe and quite popular.



An effective cooling herb, Chickweed is used as an anti-inflammatory to reduce the swellings in fingers, hands and feet from sprains, arthritis and gout. Traditional folklore claims to use Chickweed to treat obesity. This may be due to its action as a diuretic, but as an herbalist and a counselor, what I recommend to my clients who want to loose weight is to establish and maintain an excellent nutritional program, frequent and enjoyable exercise and a positive attitude.

By the way, it truly is not a weed that is coming up all over your garden and yard. It is Cleavers, *Galium aparine*, commonly known as Bedstraw, Goosegrass, Sticky Willie or Catchweed. It is believed that the bed of baby Jesus was stuffed with Bedstraw. This plant,

which acts like a botanical Velcro, is an important and valuable herbal medicine. As a matter of



fact, Cleavers stimulated the invention of Velcro.

It is sticky however, and it grows long and lanky with whorled leaves on long stems. It is a European native and is often found on roadsides, fields and in moist places. It returns every year in early spring to remind us to take our spring tonics and get our blood flowing smoothly and easily. Cleavers is a blood purifier and helps to cleanse the circulatory system after a sluggish winter season.

Cleavers can be eaten fresh in a spring salad and acts as a cooling herb, so it is helpful for fevers. Cleavers is known for relieving swollen lymph glands and supporting the functions of the lymphatic system. I use the aerial parts of the plant as a urinary astringent for treating urinary and reproductive organ inflammations. This fresh herb along with other urinary herbs including Chickweed, Uva ursi, Nettles and Cornsilk make my [Kidney Tonic Tea](#) a good choice for



urinary issues. Cleavers can also be useful in treating arthritis and as a poultice for burns and rashes. Cleavers is also used cosmetically to clear the complexion, control dandruff and as a natural deodorant. Cleavers makes a pleasant tasting tea and soon it will time to harvest it and tincture the fresh plant. Herbal tinctures made from fresh plant material are truly the most powerful medicines.