

## ESSIAC TEA

Essiac Tea is a blend of herbs that is believed by many to have cancer-treating properties. Some people take essiac tea on occasion for general health purposes, detoxification, or for healing of various ailments other than cancer. Some of these other ailments include AIDS, asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome, diabetes, immune system disorders, liver problems, Lyme disease and lupus erythematosus.

It was discovered by a Canadian nurse, Rene Caisse, who named the blend by spelling her last name backwards. The original formula is believed to have its roots in native Canadian Ojibwa medicine and contains sheep sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), burdock root (*Arctium lappa*), slippery elm inner bark (*Ulmus rubra*, formerly known as *Ulmus fulva*) and Indian or Turkish rhubarb root (*Rheum palmatum*).

In the 1970s, Caisse provided the formula to Resperin Corporation Ltd., with the understanding that Resperin would coordinate a scientific trial in humans. Although a study was initiated, it was stopped early amidst questions of improper preparation of the formula and inadequate study design. This research was never completed.

Resperin Corporation Ltd., which owned the Essiac name, formally went out of business after transferring rights to the Essiac name and selling the secret formula to Essiac Products Ltd., which currently distributes products through Essiac International.

To make Essiac Tea, the following four herbs are commonly used.  
Often other herbs and ingredients are added.

### **SHEEP SORREL** (*Rumex acetosella*)

Common names are field sorrel, red top sorrel, sour grass and dog eared sorrel. It is a hardy perennial, and is much smaller than either French or Garden Sorrel. Is often tinged a deep red hue especially towards the end of the summer. It grows to about a foot high. It has narrow sharp pointed leaves and spikes of green flowers turning to red. Flowers in late spring.

Sheep sorrel grows wild in most parts of the world except the tropics. Abundant in Canada and Britain, it is considered a common weed in the U.S. and thrives with little moisture in acidic soils. Do not buy or harvest more than a year's supply of Sheep Sorrel, as it loses its potency when stored longer. Fresh, dry Sheep Sorrel will be green in color and have an aroma of sweet grass. To grow your own Sheep sorrel, there are seed sources on the internet and the seeds are inexpensive (200 seeds cost \$3.00 or less).

Sheep Sorrel is high in vitamins A, B complex, C, D, K and E and the minerals include significant levels of calcium, iron, silicon, magnesium, sulphur, zinc, manganese, iodine and copper. Sheep Sorrel also contains beta carotene and chlorophyll; citric, malic, oxalic, tannic and tartaric acids and it is rich in potassium oxalate. Because of the oxalic acid it contains, Sheep Sorrel is sometimes not recommended for people who have a history of kidney stones. For more information, see discussion and opinions about this.

Young Sheep Sorrel leaves were popular as a cooking dressing and as an addition to salads in France several hundred years ago. Indians also use Sheep Sorrel leaves as a tasty seasoning for meat dishes and also baked it into their breads. In early days it was of use against scurvy.

Sorrel plants have been a folk remedy for cancer for centuries both in Europe and Asia, more recently in North America. Alleged to break down tumors and alleviate some chronic conditions and degenerative diseases, it is an astringent and diuretic. It has been anecdotally reported to be a fever reducer, aid digestion, relieve stomach hemorrhage and jaundice. There are no scientific studies that prove Sheep Sorrel does anything of benefit for any health condition.

### **BURDOCK ROOT** (Arctium lappa)

The burdock is a member of the thistle family and is a common pasture weed throughout North America that prefers damp soils. It grows to more than 3 feet tall and is also called Personata, Happy Major, Lappa, Fox's Clote, Thorny Burr, Beggar's Buttons, Cackle Buttons and Philanthropium.

The roots, young stems and seeds of the Burdock plant are edible. Young stalks are boiled to be eaten like asparagus, raw stems and young leaves are eaten in salads. Parts of the Burdock plant are eaten in China, Hawaii and among the Native American cultures of this continent.

It is the root of the Burdock plant that is harvested for folk medicinal use. The roots are about an inch wide but up to three feet long. The roots should be harvested in the fall of the first year or the spring of the second. Later during the second year the plant produces burrs such as shown in the picture above.

Burdock root contains vitamins B complex and E. Trace minerals are potassium, phosphorous, chromium, cobalt, iron, magnesium, silicon, zinc and sodium. It provides insulin, a helpful sugar for diabetics and hypoglycemics because it does not elicit rapid insulin production.

Buy Burdock root only from a reliable supplier. In one documented case, belladonna was substituted for burdock, causing atropine poisoning (burdock does not contain atropine). Fresh burdock root has a distinct aroma.

Both European and Chinese herbalists have long considered burdock root's "lightly warming, moistening effect" an excellent tonic for the lungs and liver. It reportedly stimulates toxic waste through the skin and urine, improving digestion. The Chinese use Burdock Root as an aphrodisiac, tonic and rejuvenator. Some say it is good against arthritis and rheumatism.

The anecdotal beneficial effects of this herb includes increasing circulation to the skin, helping to detoxify the epidermal tissues. It has been used in treating psoriasis and acne, among other skin conditions. Burdock root has been reported to destroy bacteria and fungus cultures.

Anti-tumor properties have also been reported. Burdock is one of the finest blood purifiers in the herbal system. It is classified as an alterative, diuretic and diaphoretic. It helps the kidneys to filter out impurities from the blood very quickly. It clears congestion in respiratory, lymphatic, urinary and circulatory systems.

### **SLIPPERY ELM** (*Ulmus fulva*)

This elm tree is part of the Ulmaceae family; other members include nettles. It is a stately tree that reaches 60 feet. Its trunk bark is brown, but its branch bark is whitish. Its leaves are broad, rough, hairy on both sides, toothed, and the leaf buds are covered with a dense yellow wool. The flowers are stalkless. This tree is also known as red elm, moose elm, or Indian elm. It is a favorite shade and ornamental tree. It is found throughout Canada and the U.S.

The pinkish white inner bark of the tree contains the tree's healing properties. Slippery elm bark can be purchased in cut or powdered form from an herb supply house. Don't harvesting it yourself because Slippery Elm is close to becoming an endangered tree species.

Slippery elm bark contains, as its primary ingredient, a mucilage, as well as quantities of gallic acid, phenols, starches, sugars, vitamins A, B complex, C, K and P. It contains large amounts of calcium, magnesium, and sodium, as well as lesser amounts of chromium and selenium, and trace amounts of iron, phosphorous, silicon and zinc. The powder should be light beige.

According to herbalists, the powdered bark can be used as a nutritious drink for those with inflammatory bowel disease, or for bronchitis. It is healing and soothing to mucous membranes. Slippery elm's calcium content makes it a good calmative medicine for those with emotional or nervous problems. As a tonic it is known for its ability to soothe and strengthen the organs, tissues and mucous membranes, especially the lungs and stomach.

According to some herbalists, an antibiotic and anti-microbial effect has also been reported along with an ability to remove toxins from the body; therefore, it promotes faster healing of cuts, burns, ulcers and wounds. It is alleged to revitalize the entire body.

Allergic reactions are possible. Otherwise, the medical literature contains no reports of slippery elm causing harm. Again, use only reliable sources, it would be best to purchase this herb because the novice could kill a tree by stripping off bark carelessly. Note: sometimes the powdered commercial product is adulterated with flour or other starchy substances which create a gravy-like decoction, so beware.

**TURKEY RHUBARB** (*Rheum palmatum*)

Rhubarb is commonly used for pies, jams and as stewed rhubarb. Its red, bittersweet stems are found in supermarket produce shelves each spring and many people have it in their backyards. The Turkey Rhubarb is a member of the rhubarb family with roots which have a particularly strong and desirable potency. The leaves of the Turkey Rhubarb are somewhat rough. The root is thick, of an oval shape, sending off long, tapering branches. Externally it is brown, internally a deep yellow color. It has a long thick root, brownish on the outside and full of reddish veins inside, similar to Garden Rhubarb. It flowers early to midsummer. It is also known as East Indian Rhubarb or China Rhubarb and has been used in China for more than 2,000 years.

Turkey Rhubarb must be purchased because its natural habitat is in China and Tibet. Rene Caisse preferred this variety to the common rhubarb because its medicinal properties were stronger and the taste less bitter.

The Turkey Rhubarb root contains vitamin A, many of the B complex, C, and P; calcium, chlorine, copper, iodine, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorous, potassium, silicon, sodium, sulfur, and zinc.

The rhubarb root exerts a gentle laxative action by stimulating the secretion of bile into the intestines. It also stimulates the gall duct to expel toxic waste matter, thus purging the body of waste bile and food. As a result, it is alleged that the liver is cleansed and chronic liver problems are relieved. In small doses, the powdered root is an astringent and checks diarrhea, but in larger doses it irritates the colon causing the bowels to evacuate (diarrhea).

If diarrhea or abdominal discomfort develops, contact a qualified health practitioner. It may be necessary to either lower the dosage until the body adjusts to it, or stop taking it.