

Achillea millefolium



Family: Asteraceae

Common names: Yarrow,
Milfoil

Ayurvedic name: Sahastra
patri, Swetadurva

Plant profile:

It is an erect leafy perennial growing up to a height of 50 cm. The plant has oblong-lanceolate dissected leaves with the lower leaves being stalked while the upper ones are stalkless. The stem is grooved and the flower heads are about 6 mm across with usually 5 rounded papery margins. The slender cropping rootstock has numerous roots and stolons with blunt succulent scales at each node. This plant is found at an elevation of 1800-3600 m in meadows and cultivated areas from Pakistan in the east up to Uttaranchal in the west. Yarrow is common throughout Europe and Asia and is native to the British Isles.

Medicinal uses:

- **Parts used:** Leaves and flowering tops
- **Active principles:** The whole plant contains essential oil, HCN-glucoside achillein, an acid termed achilleic acid and tannin. The plant also contains alkaloids, achilleine and stychnidine, and bitter compounds which give yarrow its antiseptic, stomachic, antispasmodic, antipyretic, astringent and diaphoretic properties. It can be used for both external and internal purposes. Fresh leaves and flowers also have many cosmetic uses.
- **Diseases cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** Local inhabitants chew the leaves to relieve toothache as it produces a pungent, but tingling and cooling sensation bringing immediate relief. This plant has a historical reputation for healing wounds. In former times it had a high reputation as a vulnerary, hence its common English name of nosebleed. It is also especially valuable as an emmenagogue and is commonly used in the treatment of bruises, sprains and swollen tissues, healing wounds and itching by different communities.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** A soft paste is applied over cuts and wounds and covered with breathable tape. It is used to treat mastitis (inflammation of a mammary gland usually due to bacterial infection in the teat or udder).
- **Ayurveda/Unani preparation.** In Unani medicine, this drug is an ingredient of “Arq Brinjasif” (used against liver troubles) and of “Arq Gaz” (used to treat fevers due to inflammation of spleen).
- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates pitta-kapha
 - Systemic effects: It treats bruises, sprains and swollen tissues, heals wounds and itching.
 - Digestive system: Treats piles, flatulence, abdominal colic, liver troubles, diarrhoea and digestive upsets.
 - Blood vascular system: Used as a cure for portal hypertension.
 - Urino-genital system: Used to treat several menstrual disorders.

- Temperature: Treats infectious fever and intermittent fever.
- **Drug preparation:** The best form for administering yarrow is as an infusion, which can be prepared by macerating the leaves and flowering tops in water.
 - The plant is used in the form of juice (prepared by maceration), powder, as a decoction or a soft paste.
 - Externally, it can be applied as a poultice, liniment or lotion while internally, it is used through ingestion, ceremonial smoke and snuff.