MEADOWSWEET

The flowers of this elegant perennial can be used for tea and as a sweetener. Made into a syrup, it adds a lovely vanilla-like flavour to cold drinks and fruit salads. Used in Scandinavia and Britain to make mead.

Medicinal use

The flowering tops contain salicylic acid from which aspirin is made. Flowers, leaves and root also contain flavonoids, volatile oil, tannins, coumarin and vitamin C.

One of the best digestive remedies

–   For heartburn, excess acidity and gastric ulcers
–   To calm an overactive digestive system
–   For indigestion and to soothe an upset stomach
–   For nausea and diarrhea

Meadowsweet is also excellent to reduce fevers and relieve pain in muscles and joints. A good diuretic, and an important remedy in the treatment of arthritis and other rheumatic complaints.

Cautions Use only small doses for children under the age of 12 due to the salicylate content. For the same reason, meadowsweet should be avoided by people with salicylate/aspirin sensitivity.

History

In 1839 the German chemists Karl Jacob Löwig and Salomon Weidemann succeeded in isolating salicylic acid from meadowsweet and named it "spiraea acid". The Bayer company synthesized acetylsalicylic acid as a remedy for arthritis and fever. They named it a(cetyl)spir(aea)in = aspirin.

Meadowsweet was one of the sacred herbs of the Druids.

The whole plant was once used as a strewing herb filling houses with a sweet almond-like scent.