

# SAINT JOHN'S WORT

## LATIN NAME

*Hypericum perforatum*

## SYNONYMS

Perforate St John's wort

Common St John's wort

## FAMILY

St John's wort family

(*Hypericaceae*)

## KEY WORDS

Nerves and pain.

Depression. Healing.

## MEDICINAL PARTS

Herb tops and flowers

## WHERE FOUND

Dry sunny places, pastures, farmland, gardens, hedge banks, open woods, road sides. In Europe, West Asia, North Africa. Introduced in North and South America, India, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa.

Often treated as an invasive noxious weed.

## DOSE

1 heaped teaspoon to a cup of boiling water. Infuse for 10-15 minutes. Drink ½-1 cup. Three times per day.

## PREPARATIONS

The tea can be drunk hot or cold, or used, cooled, as a compress or wet packs. Infused oil as a dressing or in massage oil.

## Infused St John's Wort Oil

Ingredients: Organic olive oil  
Flowering tops  
Clean glass jar

## Method:

Leave the freshly picked St John's wort to wilt for a few hours to evaporate moisture and let bugs escape.

Fill the jar with the flowering tops. Add enough oil to cover the herb completely.

Close the jar and leave it in a sunny window sill for 3 week.

Filter into a clean bottle.

There are several members of the genus *Hypericum*, deriving their name from the Greek *hyper* (above) and *eikon* (picture) referring to the long tradition of picking *Hypericum* on St John's Day (24 June) and hanging a small bouquet over doorways and religious icons to ward off evil spirits.

## Medicinal use

The flowering tops contain volatile oil, hypericins, catechins, proanthocyanins and flavonoids (notably rutin). Taken as a tea, St John's wort is an excellent sedative and gentle painkiller used for rheumatic pain, nerve pain, facial neuralgia, tooth ache, shock, anxiety, tension. Also for depression and menopausal nerve problems. Externally, in a compress, as a lotion or an infused oil, it is a good remedy for speeding up wound healing, and for healing mild burns, sunburn, bruises, varicose veins and haemorrhoids.

## Cautions

Use St John's wort with caution, and avoid using it during pregnancy. It can cause photosensitivity and discoloration to the skin if exposed to too much sun. It can also interfere with prescription drugs, such as prozac, paxil, oral contraceptives, antidepressants, immune suppressants, warfarin, digoxin and HIV medication.

## History

St John's wort has a very long history of use as a medicinal herb. In 1652 Nicholas Culpepper wrote in his *British Herbal and Family Physician* (a book which has been in print ever since!):

"...the leaves are narrow and full of small holes, which cannot be so well perceived, as when they are held up to the light; at the tops of the stalks and branches stand yellow flowers of five leaves a piece, with many yellow threads in the middle, which being bruised, do yield a reddish juice like blood."

"...it is under the celestial sign of Leo and the dominion of the Sun. It is a singular wound herb ... it healeth inward hurts or bruises; made into an ointment, it opens obstructions, dissolves swellings, and closes up the lips of wounds."

