



Althea officinalis (Marshmallow)



**Althea is a balm of unconditional love.
Surrendering to Althea brings you back to center, back to your heart.**

Family/Other names

- Malvacea (Mallow or Hibiscus) family
- Cheeseflower, White Mallow, Common Marshmallow
- The plant's Latin name, *althaea*, derives from the word *althainein* which is a Greek word that means "to cure."

Morphology (Form) and Relationships Through the Seasons

Winter

- Seeds need to be stratified to germinate (cold/moist)
- Roots medicinal with high amounts of mucilage – extracts best in tepid water (warm to room temp)
- Harvest roots late fall/winter

Spring

- Propagate through seed or crown pieces
- Moist, rich soils
- Site in an area with good air circulation
- Full sun/part shade
- Soft, soft, soft leaves.

- Can collect and dry leaves for tea or poultices

Summer

- 3-5 ft tall
- Could cut foliage down and use as biomass (compost it) if floppy

Late Summer

- Flowers Late July – Sept
- Pale pink/white Flowers – 5 heart shade petals, pistil and stamen are purple/magenta
- Flowers are a source of food for insects (pollen and nectar)
- Flowers edible/medicinal
- Good air circulation – or rust may appear on foliage/stems (fungal parasite)

Fall

- Stems are hollow and can be used for insect “hotels”

Materia Medica of Marshmallow

Primary Tastes

- Sweet
- Salty
- Moist
- Leaves – slightly drying/astringent

Energetics

- Cool/Moist
- Primary Elemental Correspondence: Water/Earth

Tissue state (what tissue states this herb is remedial for)

- Excitation (Hot)
- Atrophy (Dry)

Primary affinities to organs, organ systems, tissues

- Gut
- Kidney
- Bladder
- Lungs
- Mucousal Membranes

Vitalist Actions (functional terms of how the herb is shifting physiology in the body)

- Demulcent
- Nutritive
- Diuretic
- Vulnerary
- Laxative
- Expectorant

Traditional Chinese Medicine

- Tonifies Yin, clears heat, drains damp, moistens sinews

Other Thoughts

- Very safe
- Best as an infusion, mucilage is not soluble in alcohol
- Could interfere with the absorption of pharmaceutical drugs (mucilage coats the membranes)

References

Ross, Jeremy. *A Clinical Materia Medica: 120 Herbs in Western Use*. Greenfields Press: Regensberg, Germany, 2010.

Tilgner, Dr. Sharol Marie. *Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth*. Second Edition. Wise Acres LLC: Pleasant Hill, Oregon, 2009.

Crow Feather Farm, Eugene, OR.