



# Dogs Naturally

Be your dog's hero

## IRIDOLOGY

*a window into disease*

coping with

## STRESS

Remedies for

## RESCUES

FOOD

ENERGETICS

## PANCREATITIS

Natural Solutions

*The Problem With*

## SUPPRESSION



SPECIAL RESCUE ISSUE

## Skullcap

**Botanical Name:** *Scutellaria lateriflora*

**Family:** Labiatae

**Parts Used:** All above ground parts (the “aerial”)

**When you see skullcap be aware that there are two main genuses of this plant with very different properties. *Scutellaria baicalensis* known as Baikal Skullcap (Asian skullcap), offers its main remedy for “hot and damp” conditions such as dysentery and diarrhea; the other, *Scutellaria lateriflora* (American skullcap), is used as a nervine, affecting the nervous and structural systems, and is the subject of this column.**

**S**kullcap is native to North America and thrives in damp conditions with lots of sun, such as riverbanks. It is a slender 2-3 ft high square stemmed perennial branching out with opposite, serrated leaves. The blue flowers grow only on one side of the stem (lateral), hence the name *lateriflora*. The flowers have two lips: the upper is long and has a shape that resembles a cap on the appendage to the flower. This is where the name came from as *scutella* means small dish in Latin.

The color we see in the flowers, leaves, stalks and roots of plants are often significant information for the plant signature. Herbalist Matthew Wood states that “brilliant blue” is one of the most reliable of the color signatures. It almost always indicates an antispasmodic.

*Scutellaria lateriflora* was formerly referred to as Mad Dog Weed. In the late 1700s, a New England doctor claimed his experiments proved the herb could prevent and cure hydrophobia (rabies); these claims have since proven inaccurate. In the 19th century Eclectic doctors used the herb primarily as a tranquilizer or sedative for nervousness and insomnia.

Skullcap is a nervine tonic, a light sedative as well as antispasmodic and is recommended for nearly every ailment within the nervous system. It has antibacterial properties and contains flavonoids, which provide the antispasmodic action and likely the sedative action. It relaxes states of nervous tension while at the same time renewing and resetting the central nervous system. It has a specific use in the treatment of seizures as well as epilepsy. It is very helpful

with depressed animals who are exhausted mentally. This may come from overwork or loss and is most common with shelter dogs or dogs passed from home to home, but can also occur in females separated from their puppies. The flower essence of skullcap can be a nice addition to the herb in the above situations as it helps relax the animal while activating the neurological system and the meridians. It is also helpful with addictions and habitual disorders that can be self-harming and hard to let go of for many dogs.

The part of the plant we use is the whole of the aerial which is high in zinc, vitamin C and potassium. Harvest in the flowering period of the plant, usually in late summer. The plant can be used fresh at 1 to 2 tbsp per 16 oz water to make a tea, or dried using 1 to 2 tsp per 16 oz water; bring to a boil for one minute, then simmer for 8 to 10 minutes. When using the herb in water extraction it will be bitter and therefore is best mixed with other herbs or raw honey.

The preferred way to use skullcap for dogs is in a powdered blend with other calming herbs such as chamomile, St John’s wort, passionflower, etc, for a well-balanced calming formula. While there are no known reports of toxicity with the herb, it is said that large amounts of skullcap can cause confusion and twitching. Therefore I recommend using skullcap as 20 percent or less of your calming formula. If using tincture, medicinal amounts only are recommended.

This herb is a good catalyst for creating synergy to work smoothly within the nervous system, bringing calm to the mind and body. A formula containing skullcap can help calm the mind and bring perspective for the canine to have clear judgment in stressful situations, which may result in better behavior. 



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