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St John's Wort

Botanical Name: *Hypericum perforatum*

Family: Hypericaceae

Parts Used: Flower buds, flowers, leaves and stem

The flowers have five petals, are bright yellow with black dots and are broad at the upper end of the stalk. The leaves are yellowish-green with transparent dots (glands) through the tissue of the leaf. When you crush the flower bud or the flower itself, it excretes a reddish-purple liquid. This confirms the "signature" of the plant as red plant extracts are believed to have wound healing properties.

Saint John's Wort (SJW) is so named because it blooms around June 24th, the Feast Day of Saint John the Baptist. The genus name *Hypericum* is derived from the Greek *hyper* (over) and *eikon* (picture) from the practice of hanging plants over a religious icon to ward off evil. The species name *perforatum* refers to small oil glands in the leaves that look like small pin holes when held up to the light.

There is documented evidence for SJW's anti-depressant, anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial effects. Hypericin and pseudohypericin provide the anti-viral and anti-depressive action. SJW contains high concentrations of immune-modulating flavonoids, as well as quinones, polyphenols, tannins and other constituents in the flower bud, flower, leaves and some in the stem.

Harvest when flowers are in full bloom in your location. It grows in fields, along river banks, ocean shores and anywhere there is poor soil.

My favorite way to use SJW is a solar oil infusion. Cut your SJW and ensure it is dry; place loosely in a glass jar, then add extra virgin olive oil until ½ inch from the top of the jar. Stir with a clean, dry utensil to release any air bubbles, cap tightly and label with the ingredients and date. Leave outdoors in direct sunlight for 30 days. The heat inside a window can be too intense but the south side of your property on a table or rock will work nicely. After 30 days, strain and place the infusion in a clean jar; label and store for future use. You can compost your plant material.

You will now have a useful medicinal oil as a base for salves or as a massage oil for inflamed nerves and muscles.

Use SJW salve or infused oil to reduce heat and inflammation; it penetrates deep to the nerve endings to cool and release throbbing tension. It's helpful in healing hot spots, especially when combined with anti-viral and antiseptic herbs and perhaps tea tree and lavender essential oils. Added to shampoo as a tea infusion, its astringent properties help with oily fur and dandruff. Gently simmer 1 oz of fresh or dry herbs in 4 oz water for 20 minutes. Strain and add to a natural shampoo.

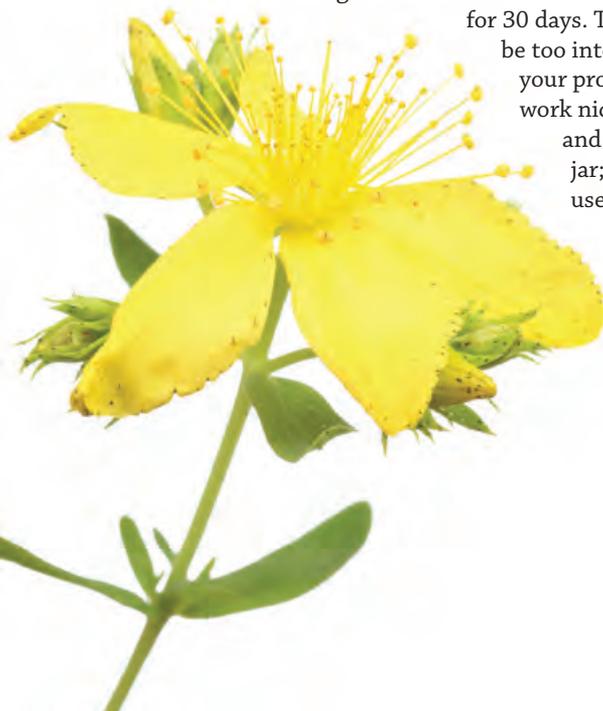
SJW is a nervine and mood lifter. It can be blended with other like herbs such as skullcap, chamomile and passionflower for a gentle, effective calming formula. It can calm the nerves from bee stings, bug bites, cuts or wounds, inflamed tissue (external or internal), mucous membranes, sciatica, asthma, bone spurs, sunburn and anything that causes heat and inflammation to the nervous system and spinal cord.

SJW flower essence protects against sleep disturbances such as insomnia, nightmares, night sweats and incontinence.

Flower essence teacher Patricia Kaminski (Flower Essence Society) says: "Though the herb has become popular for its ability to successfully treat depression, a deeper understanding of this five-pointed, radiant yellow-blossomed plant, is that it helps the soul encounter darkness, and gives protection from negative spiritual entities."

Cautions

While SJW has been used safely for over 2,000 years, it can interact adversely with several types of pharmaceuticals. Before using SJW, ask your veterinarian, herbalist or health care professional about any contraindications with current health protocols. The hypericin in SJW is a photosensitizing substance that reacts with light to cause skin burns in light-skinned people as well as animals. If a pasture is infested with SJW, cattle can over-graze on it, become photo-sensitive and die of sunburn (but as a topical healing balm it protects against sunburn). 🐾



Joyce Belcher is an herbalist/formulator of pet supplements and herbal medicinals for veterinarians and is the founder of Herbs for Life Inc. She lives in York, Maine with her husband, two dogs and two cats; they are all rescues. Visit Joyce at petwellnessblends.com