

RED ROOT (*Ceanothus* spp.)

Family: Rhamnaceae.

Part used: The root.

Collection: In the fall or early spring, whenever the root has been subjected to a good frost. The inner bark of the root is a bright red, and this color extends through the white woody root as a pink tinge after a freeze. The root is extremely tough when it dries. It should be cut into small 1- or 2-inch pieces with plant snips while still fresh.

Actions: First and foremost a lymph system stimulant, anti-inflammatory, and tonic. It is also astringent, a mucous membrane tonic, alterative, antiseptic, expectorant, antispasmodic, and a blood coagulant.

Active against: I have been unable to find any studies testing *Ceanothus* against specific disease organisms. However, the historical record shows a long history of use for stubborn or fetid ulceration of the skin and mucous membranes, strep throat, general throat and upper respiratory infections, malaria, and diphtheria. Like oak (which has been found effective against numerous disease organisms), it is strongly astringent. There is every indication that *Ceanothus* will prove specific against particular disease organisms in spite of the dearth of scientific study.

About Red Root

Red root is an important herb in that it helps facilitate clearing of dead cellular tissue from the lymph system. When the immune system responds to acute conditions or the onset of disease, as white blood cells kill invading bacteria they are taken to the lymph system for disposal. When the lymph system can clear out dead cellular material rapidly, the healing process is increased, sometimes dramatically. The herb shows especially strong action whenever any portion of the lymph system is swollen, infected, or inflamed. This includes lymph nodes, tonsils (entire back of throat), spleen, and appendix. There is some evidence that the activity of red root in the lymph nodes also enhances the lymph nodes' production of lymphocytes, specifically the formation of T cells.

I have found that the action of echinacea increases dramatically when it is combined with red root or with red root and licorice. Historically, red root has also been considered specific for liver inflammation and congestion, and it may be of benefit in those conditions.