

BONESET (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

Family: Compositae.

Part used: Above-ground plant.

Collection: If allowed to dry, the flowering plant will usually go to seed. It should be collected when it is in flower (August or September) if being tinctured fresh. Otherwise it should be picked just before flowering, hung upside down in a shaded place, and allowed to thoroughly air-dry.

Actions: Immunostimulant (increases phagocytosis to four times that of echinacea), diaphoretic, febrifuge, mucous membrane tonic, smooth muscle relaxant, anti-inflammatory, cytotoxic, mild emetic, peripheral circulatory stimulant, gastric bitter.

Active against: Although many of the *Eupatoriums* have been found active against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, boneset has not. Traditionally used for dengue fever, malaria, pneumonia, colds, and flu, it has not, to my knowledge, been tested against malaria or dengue fever organisms. Empirically, its strength seems to be for pain relief and as an immunostimulant, a tonic for the mucous membrane systems, and a febrifuge.

About Boneset

To lay the matter straight: There is endless discussion and pontification about how boneset got its name. One school has it that the common name for dengue fever, breakbone fever, was the genesis. Another says that flus and colds were historically called "breakbone fever" in the early colonies and thus gave boneset its name. Still another school insists that the traditional use of boneset by indigenous peoples for healing broken bones (they really did) gave it its name. They are all somewhat correct.

In actuality, boneset has two ancient common names: boneset and ague weed. Ague is an old term for any disease marked by intermittent fever, chills, and pain in the joints and bones. Boneset has a marked ability to allay those conditions, especially bone pain — it settles pain in the bones. Pain in the bones accompanying any ague-like condition is in fact the specific indication for the use of boneset. Dengue fever, a virus transmitted by a mosquito (one of the "new" old epidemics now making inroads from Mexico into the southern United States), is in fact attended by intense pain in the joints and bones, head, eyes, and muscles.