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The Emmenagogues:

Herbs that move blood and relieve pain

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ANGELICA

LOVAGE

VERVAIN *Verbena officinalis*; *Verbenaceae*

Energetics: cold, bitter

Meridians/organs: liver spleen

Part used: the aerial portions

Active constituents: two glycosides (verbenaline and verbenine) and essential oil tannin, bitter principle and mucilage

Properties: emmenagogue, astringent, antispasmodic, diaphoretic, alterative, diuretic, galactagogue, cholagogue

Uses: It is used for delayed and painful menses nervousness, hemorrhage, fevers, urinary problems, hepatitis, jaundice, insufficient mother's milk, liver congestion, cirrhosis, ascites and mastitis. During the middle ages it was used to make an ointment that was regarded as useful for sorcery.

Dosage: standard dosage or 3-9 gms.

CORYDALIS (Turkey corn) *Corydalis formosa* and *Papaveraceae*

Energetics: acrid, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs affected: lungs, liver, heart

Parts used: the root

Active constituents: a wide variety of alkaloids inducing bulbocapnine, and corydaline

Properties: emmenagogue, analgesic, antispasmodic, diuretic, bitter, tonic

Uses: This is one of the best herbs for relieving internal, menstrual, abdominal, heart and deficiency pains. It may be used with other appropriate guiding herbs for almost any kind of pain, including the pain of rheumatism and arthritis. This is one of the most valued herbs for pain in Traditional Chinese Medicine. It has approximately 40% the strength of morphine without causing drowsiness or other addictive side effects. A basic blood moving and pain relieving combination is equal parts corydalis, frankincense, myrrh, dang quai and ligusticum. All or part of this combination

can be added to any formula to relieve pain. Combined with other herbs it is used as a bitter tonic for the stomach and urinary system.. It is grown in the West as an ornamental, so could be made available from local sources. It deserves wider appreciation and recognition from Western herbalists.

Problems: Corydalis deserves wider appreciation from Western herbalists.

Dosage: 3-20 gms.

TURMERIC *Curcuma longa*; Zingiberaceae

Energetics: spicy, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs affected: heart, liver, lung

Part used: rhizome

Active constituents: essential oil, valepotriates, alkaloids

Properties: emmenagogue, aromatic stimulant, cholagogue, alterative analgesic, astringent, antiseptic

Uses: It regulates the menses, aids digestion, dissolves gallstones, de- congests the liver, may be combined with barberry or Oregon grape root for releasing the liver, as effective as Chinese bupleurum. It relieves menstrual pains and helps reduce uterine tumors. Used externally or internally, turmeric promotes healing in cases of trauma or injury. A condiment for cooking, it is the main ingredient in curries. The Chinese prefer the smaller, less aromatic roots (you Jon), which they consider to be cooling, for medicinal usage.

Dosage: standard dosage or 3-9 gms.

MOTHERWORT *Leonorus cardiaca*; Labiatae

Energetics: bitter, spicy, slightly cold

Meridians/Organs affected: pericardium, liver

Parts used: the aerial portion
constituents: bitter principle, and bitter glycosides, leonurin, alkaloids, tannin, essential oil, resin, organic acids

Properties: emmenagogue, astringent, carminative, cardiac tonic, diuretic, antispasmodic, anti rheumatic

Uses: It is used to treat menstrual disorders, (delayed or stopped menses), menopause, as a uterine stimulant, for cramps, gas, nervous heart problems, cardiac edema, swollen thyroid, neuralgia and rheumatic complaints. Chinese women often use it combined with Doug quai as a menstrual regulator. This is an important heart herb in Western herbalism.

Dosage: 10-30 gms.

BUGLEWEED *Lycopus virginicus*; Labiatae

Energetics: bitter, spicy, warm

Meridians/organs affected: spleen, liver

Part used: the aerial portions

Active constituents: tannin, lithospermic acid, phenolic substances and traces of essential oil

Properties and uses: Western bugle weed is noted for its sedative, astringent and mildly narcotic properties. It should be used only in its fresh state (or freshly tinctured), not dried. It is different from the Chinese species (*Lycopi lucidus*), which it closely resembles, although both grow in damp or marshy environments. The Chinese variety has emmenagogue and diuretic properties and is used for delayed menstruation and urinary problems. For treating traumatic bruises and injuries, it is combined with other herbs in a liniment, and also taken internally. Both varieties are good for cardiac problems. *B. virginicus* has been shown to be effective for sedating high thyroid, especially when combined with motherwort. Effects are only noted after taking the combinations for two weeks.

Precautions: Generally contraindicated in pregnancy, as are most herbs in this category.

Dosage: 3-9 gms.

PEACH SEED *Prunus Persica*; *Rosaceae*

Energetics: bitter, sweet, neutral

Meridians/organs affected: heart, liver, colon

Part used: inner kernel of the seed

Active constituents: amygdalin, emulsion, oleic acid, glycerin and linoleic acids.

Properties: emmenagogue, demulcent, laxative

Uses: It is used to treat delayed menses and congested blood (especially in the lower pelvic cavity) and abdominal pains. For traumatic injuries it is both taken internally and used externally in a liniment. It is one of the stronger blood-moving herbs, and therefore useful in reducing tumors. It is an important demulcent laxative, especially when combined with other laxative herbs.

Precautions: Contraindicated during pregnancy.

Dosage: 3-9 gms.

SAFFLOWER *Carthamus tinctorius*; *Compositae*

Energetics: spicy, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs Affected: spleen, liver, heart

Part used: flowers

Active constituents: carthamin, palmitic acid, stearic acid, arachic acid, oleic acid, linoleic and linolenic acids, safflower yellow

Properties: emmenagogue, analgesic, carminative, mild diaphoretic

Uses: It is used for delayed menses, congested and stagnant blood, poor blood circulation, blood clots, lower abdominal pains caused by blood congestion (especially in women); both internally and externally for bruises and injuries (used in liniments); and for eruptive diseases such as measles.

Dosage: 3-6 gms.

SAFFRON *Crocus sativus*; *Iridaceae*

Because it is much cheaper, safflower has been used as a substitute for saffron, sometimes under the misleading

name of American or Mexican "saffron".

Energetics: spicy, sweet, bitter, neutral

Meridians/organs affected: spleen, heart, liver, kidney

Part used: the yellow stigmas

Active constituents: When dried, the stigmas produce a glycoside called picrocine, which then forms safranal. This has the characteristic smell and the carotenoid pigment of crocine.

Properties: emmenagogue, stimulant, carminative, antispasmodic, rejuvenative, aphrodisiac, alternative, abortive

Uses: It is very expensive, but is one of the finest blood vitalizers known. It counteracts inflammatory conditions associated with excess Pitta (fire), while at the same time powerfully stimulating the circulation and regulating the spleen, liver and heart. According to David Frawley, "It is not a tonic in itself but when used together with other tonics like Doug quai, it will catalyze them to promote tissue growth in the reproductive organs and in the entire body" He further states that it is very *sattvic* or spiritually balancing and gives the energy of Love, devotion and compassion. This makes it excellent for those practicing bhakti or a devotional religious path.

It is used for a wide variety of problems including menstrual pains and irregularities, menopause, impotency, infertility, anemia, hysteria, depression, enlarged spleen and liver, neuralgic and rheumatic pains, chronic cough, asthma and chronic diarrhea.

Crocine is a very powerful yellow pigment, and is highly valued in the Middle East for the fine quality of yellow dye it yields. Even in one part per 100,000, it will color water yellow. Generally it is used to make saffron rice, to which it imparts its beautiful yellow color.

Combined with food, saffron will aid assimilation into the tissues. It is used as a tonic with other herbs and teas, in medicated oils, in medicated gleans, or in milk with honey, mixing 100 to 500 milligrams in heated milk.

Precautions: In large doses it can be narcotic, toxic and even lethal, causing violent hemorrhages. Definitely contraindicated during pregnancy.

Dosage: 100-500 mg.

CALENDULA *Calendula officinalis*; *Compositae*

Energetics: spicy, bitter, neutral

Meridians/organs affected: liver, heart, lungs

Parts used: the petals

Active constituents: essential oil containing carotenoids (carotene, calenduline and lycopine), also a saponin, resin and bitter principle

Properties: emmenagogue, diaphoretic, alternative, astringent

Uses: When taken internally it will act very similarly to safflower in regulating the menses. It also is used to ripen eruptive diseases such as measles; and promotes diaphoresis, making it useful for fevers. It is most commonly used externally, as an ointment or oil for burns, bruises and injuries.

Dosage: 3-6 gms.

FRANKINCENSE *Boswellia carterii*; *Burseraceae*

Energetics: spicy, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs affected: heart, liver, spleen

Part used: the resinous exudate

Active constituents: boswellic acid A and B, olibanoresene Arabic acid, bassorin, pinene, dipentene A and B phellandrene

Properties: emmenagogue, antiseptic, antispasmodic, nervine

Uses: It relieves menstrual pains, promotes menstruation, treats rheumatic aches and pains, and ripens carbuncles, sores and abscesses. Externally it is used in liniments for bruises and injuries, and for its antiseptic properties. It is widely used as an incense in the orient, and is thought to calm the mind and clear the cerebral circulation.

Dosage: 3-6 Gms.

MYRRH *Commiphora myrrha*; *Burseraceae*

Energetics: bitter, spicy, neutral

Meridians/organs affected: heart, liver, spleen

Part used: the gum resin

Active constituents: an essential oil, resins and gurus

Properties: emmenagogue, expectorant, antispasmodic, disinfectant, stimulant, carminative

Uses: Its uses are similar to those of frankincense, with which it is often combined in liniments and incense. Myrrh is more blood-moving, while frankincense tends to move the chi more, and is better for arthritic conditions. Myrrh is one of the most effective of all known disinfectants and is wisely used medically for this purpose. It increases circulation, heart rate and power. It is useful for amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, menopause and uterine tumors, as it: purges stagnant blood out of the uterus. Myrrh is good for many chronic diseases, including obesity and diabetes. It helps toothache pain applied externally. For inner ear infections, combine equal parts of Echinacea and Mullein with one-quarter part myrrh to make a tea. The alcoholic extracts of these herbs are combined to make a medicated oil. An excellent liniment for bruises, aches and sprains is made from a combination of myrrh, golden seal and cayenne, macerated in rubbing alcohol for about two weeks. Combined with peach seeds cud safflower, myrrh is good for stomatitis, gingivitis and laryngitis.

Myrrh is most commonly used in Chinese medicine for rheumatic, arthritic and circulatory problems. It is combined with such herbs as tienchi ginseng, safflower, Doug quai , cinnamon and Salvia milthiorrhiza (Alan shun), usually in rice wine, and used both internally and externally. However, myrrh is not as important in Chinese medicine as it is in the systems of India, the Middle East and the West, which ascribe to it tonic and rejuvenative properties. A related species, known as guggul in Ayurvedic medicine is considered one of the best substances for the treatment of circulatory problems, nervous system disorders and rheumatic complaints. Pitch from pine trees and other bush and tree resins also are used as antirheumatics.

The preparation of guggul in traditional Ayurvedic medicine can serve as a model for the detoxification of various resins intended for internal use. Place the myrrh or other resinous material in a porous or muslin bag and suspend it from two crossed sticks into a simmering tea of Triphala or other alterative herbs (turmeric also is good for improving the blood-moving properties of myrrh). After simmering for a period of time, remove the sack with the residue and continue to cook the tea down to a thick moist mat at the bottom of the pot. This is spread out in the open air to dry into solid chunks; or the residue is further prepared and softened with ghee and rolled into little pills. The dose is two or three pills the size of a mung bean, two or three times a day.

Precautions: Any resins tend to be difficult to eliminate and can cause minor damage to the kidneys if taken internally over an extended period.

Dosage: of the powder 1-15 grains, for limited periods.
In formulas (also for limited periods) 3-12 gms.

WILD GINGER *Asarum canadensis*; *Aristolochiaceae*

Energetics: spicy, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs affected: liver, heart, lungs

Part used: the whole plant alive constituents: essential oil including asorone, acids, tannin, flavonoids and resin

Properties: emmenagogue, stimulant, diuretic, carminative, diaphoretic. The Chinese variety is classified as a stimulating diaphoretic.

Uses: Promotes menses, stimulates the circulation of blood and chi, opens the meridians, aids digestion, and counteracts and eliminates gas. It also is used as a stimulating diaphoretic, to promote perspiration for the treatment of colds, coughs and flu. The Pomo Indian women of California used to drink it each month the week before their period was due, to regulate childbirth. The Chinese use their variety as a primary herb for headaches, facial nerve pain and sinus congestion.

Dosage: 2-5 gms.

PENNYROYAL *Hedeoma pulegiodes* or *Mentha pulegium*; *Labiatae*

Energetics: spicy, bitter, warm

Meridians/organs affected: liver, lung

Part used: The aerial portions

Active constituents: The major constituent is ketone pulegone. It also contains about 1 percent volatile oil.

Properties: emmenagogue, diaphoretic, carminative, antispasmodic, mild sedative

Uses: It promotes menstruation, induces perspiration, and is used for the treatment of colds and flu. It eliminates gas, nausea and relieves nervous tension. A strong infusion of the tea with brewer's yeast treats delayed menses. The oil externally applied wards off mosquitoes. For this purpose it is used alone or combined with citronella.

Precautions: To take the oil internally to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is very dangerous and in a few cases has resulted in death. All essential oils are life-threatening if taken internally. There is a possibility of fetal damage from the use of pennyroyal to induce abortion, but this may be true only of the undiluted oil and not the infusion.

Dosage: 3-6 gms.

TANSY *Tanacetum vulgare* or *Chrysanthemum vulgare* *Compositae*

Energetics: bitter, acrid, warm

Meridians/organs affected: liver, pericardium

Part used: the flower heads

Active constituents: essential oil, possibly thujone, bitter principles, glycosides, tanacetin 1 and 11, acid, resin, sugar, fat and carotenoids

Properties: emmenagogue, carminative, vermifuge

Uses: Tansy is a strong remedy to promote delayed or stopped menstruation. It also is used to eliminate worms (ascaris and pin worms). The oil is externally applied to treat injuries bruises and rheumatic complaints.

Precautions: Overdose can be toxic.

Dosage: 1 teaspoon steeped in a cup of boiling water for 20 minutes, one cup two to three times daily. In formulas 1-3 gms.

BLUE COHOSH *Caulophyllum thalictroides*; Berberidaceae

Energetics: acrid, bitter, mildly toxic

Meridians/organs affected: liver

Part used: the root

Active constituents: gum, starch, salts, phosphoric acid, soluble resin, a substance similar to saponin

Properties: emmenagogue, antispasmodic, diuretic, diaphoretic, anthelmintic

Uses: It regulates the menses and relieves cramping pains. It is taken during the last month of pregnancy to facilitate labor. Native American women used it when delivering babies fathered by whites, because it helped dilate the uterus and vaginal canal to accommodate the larger heads. It also is used for rheumatic problems, edema and swelling, epilepsy, hysteria, and chronic cases of uterine inflammation.

Dosage: standard dose or 3-9 gms.

ROSE FLOWERS *Rosa chinensis* and spp.; Rosaceae

Energetics: sweet, warm

Meridians/organs affected: Liver, heart

Part used: the partially opened tea rose flower

Active constituents: terpene alcohol

Properties: emmenagogue, mildly carminative

Uses: It promotes blood circulation, treats painful, delayed or stopped menses.

Dosage: 3-6 gms. in infusion

CHASTE BERRIES *Vitex agnus-castus*; Verbenaceae

Energetics: acrid, spicy, warm

Meridians/organs affected: liver, spleen

Part used: the berries

Active constituents: essential oil, fatty oil, flavonoid, casticin, iridoglycoside agnuside and aucubin

Properties: emmenagogue, vulnerary

Uses: It is a specific to counteract premenstrual syndrome. It also stimulates progesterone production and regulates the menses. It is specifically useful menopause and long-term taken internally for the treatment of ovarian cysts and non-cancerous breast lumps. The pulp of the berries is applied externally to relieve paralysis and limb weakness and pains. In ancient Greece and Rome, the temple priestesses used it to lessen sexual desire.

Dosage: 3-6 gms.

RUE *Ruta graveolens*; *Rutaceae*

Energetics: bitter, pungent, warm

Meridians/organs affected: liver, spleen

Part used: the aerial portions

Active constituents: essential oil, flavonoids, hyperine, rutin, hypericin, tannin, pectin, choline

Properties: emmenagogue, antispasmodic, sedative

Uses: Rue is used to regulate delayed or scanty menses, to treat cramping, strengthen the capillaries and vessels, and to lower arterial blood pressure. The tincture is taken internally to promote flexibility of the ligaments, relieve muscular spasms and rheumatic aches and pains. The oil is topically applied to relieve spasmodic pains. Oil of rue is made by macerating the leaves in olive oil and may be used as drops to relieve earache.

The homeopathic juice of the fresh plant extract applied directly strengthens the eyes. Fresh rue juice for the eyes can be preserved and applied with honey. One drop of rue honey is administered to each eye two or three times daily. The infusion of the leaves is a gargle for sore throat. Taken internally the infusion is a carminative and diaphoretic for the treatment of stomach disorders, colds, flu and similar acute problems.

Precautions: Rue should not be taken in large doses. It can have mildly toxic effects and the juice of the leaves can be a local irritant.

Dosage: Steep one teaspoon of the dried leaves in 1 cup of water and take over the period of a day. A cold extract is made by soaking a teaspoon of the dried herb in a cup of cold water for ten hours. This can be strained and taken in one or two doses during the day. Tincture of rue should be used only in doses of 5-20 drops at a time

Dose in formulas: 1-3 gms.

COLLINSONIA *Collinsonia canadensis*; *Labiatae*

Energetics: spicy, sour, warm

Meridians/Organs affected: liver, pericardium, lung, colon

Parts used: the root

Active constituent: resin, starch, tannin, mucilage and a wax-like substance

Properties: emmenagogue, astringent, diuretic, alternative

Uses: It is used for various female disorders, including excessive, insufficient and painful menstruation. It has mild regulatory function, and is used internally for gastro intestinal diseases such as gastritis, diarrhea, dysentery and colitis. It also is helpful for sore throat, bronchitis, asthma, chronic laryngitis and tracheitis, for which it is given in a honey syrup. It relieves both chi and blood congestion making it helpful for neural irritations, especially of the pneumogastric nerve regulating the heart and lungs. It has a tonic action upon the bowels and is nearly specific for hemorrhoids caused by constipation with vascular blockage This herb is known to have a near specific affinity for

problems of the rectum and anus. It is given for rectal pains and inflammation; and for dysentery with accompanying rectal problems. It treats anal fistulae, rectal ulcers and pockets, and nervous conditions affecting the rectum. Its specific indications seem to be a bearing-down sensation with accompanying heat, constriction and dryness. For rectal problems small doses are preferred: 1 to 2 drops of the tincture in water three or four times daily. It seems to be safe for use by pregnant women. It may be taken internally and directly applied to the rectum nightly in the form of an ointment or bolus. Applications of the green portions of the plant have been found to be very effective for the relief of poison oak and ivy dermatitis.

Dosage: 1-15 drops of the tincture 3 or 4 times daily. For bronchial and heart problems use 10-30 drops 3 or 4 times daily.

In formulas: 2-5 gms. diarrhea

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