Elecampane - Inula helenium

Inula has attractive bright yellow blooms and downy green leaves. It is easy to cultivate and makes a valuable addition to a medicinal herb garden.

**History and Lore**

The use of the herb is well documented historically from the time of the ancient Greek physicians. Pliny, a Roman writer of that time, wrote of Caesar’s daughter that, 'Julia Augustus let no day pass without eating some of the roots of 'Enula', considered to help digestion and cause mirth’. The Welsh physicians of the Thirteenth century called the plant 'Marchlan y Llwyglas' and used it as a treatment for burns.

In recent history the effect of the root on respiratory diseases has highlighted the value of the plant. Research has focussed on its anti-bacterial action against Mycobacterium tuberculosis and MRSA. 1,2

**Medicinal Actions**

Inula helenium is one of the best rejuvenative tonics for the lungs. It is specific to the respiratory tract, gently strengthening and stimulating all of the breathing apparatus.

- Relaxes the bronchial muscles, thereby relieving persistent coughs and asthmatic symptoms
- Soothes inflamed respiratory membranes, protecting them from further irritation
- Stimulates the movement of mucus out of the respiratory tract
- Antibacterial action
- Stimulates the appetite and digestion

**The Concept of a Tonic**

The current medical model of orthodox medicine is to treat disease once it has manifested in a full-blown illness.

Our lifestyles can deplete our vital energy; lack of sleep, stress, poor nutrition or too many late night parties. Once the vitality is diminished, all of the body systems start to function below par, we feel 'out of sorts' but not quite ill enough to get a prescription. All the little aches and pains and the low energy are swept to one side 'not to make a fuss’, until the pathway to disease is paved.

In the past, the concept of tonic herbs was well known and tonics were taken as preventive medicine (often daily) to avoid succumbing to whatever illness was doing the rounds and ensure the body was at its fullest potential and strength. Eastern
systems of healing consider regeneration and rejuvenation through tonic herbs a key concept in maintaining health.

At the Herbal Clinic we find the best way to prevent and treat disease is by maintaining optimum health in all body systems; iridology and tongue diagnosis are valuable tools, providing insight into this. Patients are often surprised to find that treatment for one condition has resolved other complaints that had persisted for years.

Inula, being a specific tonic for the respiratory system strengthens the lungs, which in turn restores vitality; breathing deeply infuses the blood with oxygen, energising the whole body and clearing the mind.

Making an Elecampane tincture

Tinctures are concentrated extracts of herbs that use an alcoholic solution or glycerol to extract the medicinal constituents from plants and preserve them. A simple tincture can be made at home using fresh or dried herbs and vodka.

1. Chop fresh elecampane root into small pieces (dried root can also be used)
2. Place in a glass jar and label with the current date and name of the herb
3. Add sufficient vodka (38% alcohol) to completely cover the herb
4. Cap with a tight fitting lid, put the jar in a dark place at room temperature, and shake at least once daily.
5. After 2 to 3 weeks, strain the contents using a fine sieve or muslin cloth.
6. Store in a labelled, amber glass bottle away from light and heat.

Only small amounts of a tincture are needed at regular intervals throughout the day. For adults and children over 12 years old one teaspoon can be taken in warm water 3-6 times daily. For children 6-12 years use half a teaspoon.
