

Blue Flag



Stimulates intestinal, liver and gallbladder function and works to correct the many problems associated with a congested liver and intestines, including jaundice, hepatitis, gastric distress, headaches, toxins, skin problems, constipation and undigested fats.

Information: Herbals/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong. Consequently, if they are not tailored to your specific needs, they can do more harm than good. This information is meant to be used by your VHC Medical Team and personal Physician as they build your Total Health Plan. Never attempt to adjust your prescribed medications and/or Natural Treatments without your physician's and Medical Team's knowledge and guidance. Since herbals/nutritionals and medications can interact with each other, it is always advisable to consult with your health care provider and The Vibrant Health Community at www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

Botanical: *Iris versicolor*

Family: *Iridaceae* (iris)

Other common names: Blue Iris, Liver Lily, Iris, Wild Iris, Flag, Lily, Poison Flag, Snake Lily, Water Flag, Dragon Flower, Dagger Flower, Fleur-de-Lis

History: Blue Flag is a beautiful, hardy perennial with deep green, sword-shaped leaves and large, blue-violet flowers that bloom from May to July on three-foot stalks. This elegant species of iris is a native of North America and may be found in Canada and the United States, growing in marshes, wet meadows and on lake and stream banks, although it is tolerant of an extreme range of conditions and can be drought tolerant. It is an ornamental that prefers rich, heavy, moist-to-wet, acid soil in sun. Blue Flag's botanical genus, *Iris*, refers to the Greek winged goddess of the rainbow, in honor of the beauty and variety of the many hued irises in the genus that grace perennial gardens. It was called Iris by early American settlers because of its close resemblance to a common European species, the yellow flag, which was the model for the *fleur-de-lis*, the emblem of French royalty. One of Blue Flag's common names, Liver Lily, refers to its use in early herbal medicine as a remedy for diseases of the liver and blood impurities. Other folk uses included remedies for skin diseases, rheumatism and even syphilis. The use of various dried iris roots (called orris) in medicines and unguents was recorded in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Blue Flag has been used for centuries as a perfume, largely because of its essential oil (twenty-five percent), consisting partly of irone, which produces a violet scent that intensifies

as the dried rhizome ages. Blue Flag was one of the most widely used medicinal plants used by Native Americans for many ailments, and the Creeks even grew it near their villages to ensure a convenient supply. The tribes used it mainly as a cathartic and emetic, and the root was officially listed for those very same applications in the *United States Pharmacopoeia* from 1820 to 1895. During the nineteenth century, Blue Flag was a very important emmenagogue and remedy for constipation, dermatitis and many other conditions, but today it is not so widely used. Blue Flag is an acrid, slightly aromatic herb, and the dried rhizomes (roots must be thoroughly dried) are used in herbal medicines. Some of the constituents in Blue Flag include beta-sitosterol, furfural, oleoresin, glucose, starch, tannin, gum, iodine, volatile oil (irone), acrid resin (iridin), fixed oil, alkaloid and acids (including traces of salicylic acid).

Beneficial Uses: Blue Flag acts as a mild, but effective, purgative that promotes bowel movement. The iridin content is said to increase intestinal peristalsis, and, as such, it has been used for centuries to relieve constipation and clear wastes from the system. Moreover, the herb has been used as a vermifuge, expelling intestinal worms, and this may be the result of its laxative activity.

As an "alterative," Blue Flag helps to gradually and favorably alter the course of an ailment or condition and assists in altering the process of nutrition and excretion, restoring normal bodily function. It also acts to cleanse and stimulate the efficient removal of waste products from the system.

Blue Flag is well known for stimulating liver and gallbladder function. It is believed that the iridin in the oleoresin acts powerfully on the liver as a purgative, clearing congestion and purifying the blood. It also stimulates bile production and helps to process and emulsify fat and to relieve biliousness (including bilious headache), jaundice and chronic hepatitis. By purifying the liver, Blue Flag works to reduce cholesterol, remove toxins, especially when there has been excessive exposure to industrial pollutants and drugs. The herb also works to relieve pain in the liver and gallbladder occurring after excessive ingestion of fatty foods, alcohol or coffee.

The combination of increased bile production and cleansing actions in the liver and blood make Blue Flag useful for chronic skin diseases, including acne, pustular eruptions, syphilitic skin diseases, herpes zoster, herpes praeputialis, psoriasis, dermatitis and eczema, especially when torpor of the liver, gallbladder and intestines (constipation) contribute to the problem. The increased biliary secretion facilitates digestion and relieves gastric irritation, soothing duodenal catarrh in the first portion of the intestine just after the stomach. In smaller doses, Blue Flag alleviates nausea, vomiting and

indigestion, but in large doses, it is an emetic that causes vomiting and gastric irritation.

Blue Flag is said to have a positive effect upon the pancreas by stimulating the flow of enzymes and bicarbonate, thus reducing acidity of stomach contents that enter the duodenal portion of the small intestine and also decreasing undigested fat in excreted waste.

As an emmenagogue, Blue Flag stimulates and promotes suppressed menstruation and regulates its flow. Because it stimulates the uterus, it was used in the nineteenth century to induce labor, but it should never be used in this manner today.

Blue Flag has been used to treat enlarged thyroid or other glandular affections, including low-grade scrofula (tuberculosis involving the swelling of the lymph nodes of the neck), goiter, swollen glands and dropsy (accumulation of fluid in tissues that causes swelling).

Used externally Blue Flag has been used to treat skin diseases, running sores, rheumatism and infected wounds.

Contraindications: Pregnant and nursing women should not use Blue Flag, nor should those who suffer from hyperthyroid conditions. Overuse (many times the recommended dosage) may cause nausea and vomiting. All parts of the fresh plant are harmful if eaten.