



Cramp Bark

It has been used to *relieve cramps of all kinds*, including menstrual pains, and *relaxes muscles and eases spasms of the lower back and legs*. Said to be useful in cases of *bronchial, gastrointestinal, genitourinary and skeletal muscle spasms*. Cramp Bark is also said to *support uterine function, regulate excessive blood flow during menstruation and menopause, ease postpartum, uterine and ovarian pain*. The herb is also *mildly sedative* and helps to *relieve many nervous conditions*.

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: *Viburnum opulus*

Family: *Caprifoliaceae* (honeysuckle)

Other common names: High Bush Cranberry, Snowball Bush, Guelder Rose, King's Crown, High Cranberry, Rose Elder, May Rose, Silver Bells, Black Haw Bark*

History: Cramp Bark is a bushy tree that is said to be a native of North America, particularly southern Canada and northeastern United States, and cultivated in Europe and Britain. Cramp Bark was a popular remedy among the Native Americans, who used it as a diuretic. The Malecites and Penobscots used it for mumps, which is interesting, since it is desirable to excrete liquids during mumps. Cramp Bark was officially listed in the *United States Pharmacopoeia* from 1894 to 1916, and it was later introduced into the *National Formulary* for the relief of asthma. One of the early applications of Cramp Bark included its use during pregnancy to diminish miscarriage, but this is no longer recommended. Cramp Bark contains the very potent antispasmodic, viopudial, and other constituents included in Cramp Bark are esculetin, scopoletin, valerianic acid, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, zinc, tannin, resin, coumarins, salicin and the bitter glycoside, viburnine.

Beneficial Uses: Cramp Bark is said to be an effective antispasmodic that helps to relieve muscle

cramps and spasms, menstrual cramps, lower back and leg spasms, and ease convulsions, lockjaw and fits. Its antispasmodic qualities were also noted in the *National Formulary* to alleviate asthma. Cramp Bark has also been used externally to reduce muscle pain and ache. As a skeletal muscle relaxant, it is thought to be wonderful for leg cramps.

The salicin content in Cramp Bark is an aspirin-like compound and effective as an analgesic and painkiller.

As a sedative, Cramp Bark is believed to alleviate nervous constipation, hypertension, palpitations, hysteria, debility and other nervous complaints. Its efficacy in cases of hypertension is said to be caused by relaxing peripheral blood vessels, thus lowering high blood pressure.

Cramp Bark is thought to have an influence upon the reproductive organs and give tone and energy to the uterus and regulate uterine function. A volatile oil extracted from Cramp Bark has shown uterine

sedative activity. The scopoletin content in the herb has been known to relax the uterus, helping to ease painful menstruation, regulate blood flow and alleviate postpartum and ovarian pain. Interestingly, it has been shown to have *both uterine-stimulant and uterine-relaxant properties*, and although it was used at one time to diminish miscarriage, that application is not now recommended.

As a bitter astringent, Cramp Bark's tannins are thought to be effective in treating excessive blood loss during menstruation and menopause. Cramp bark's astringent action also benefits atonic conditions of the pelvic organs, like uterine prolapse, and is thought to diminish hemorrhage during labor and post-partum.

Recent studies have shown that Cramp Bark is active as a smooth muscle relaxant that may also be useful as a cardiotonic.

Contraindications: Pregnant women should not use Cramp Bark unless directed by a physician. Those who are allergic to aspirin may be sensitive to Cramp Bark because of its salicin content. Cramp bark should not be taken with blood thinning medication because of the coumarin constituents in the plant and may cause you to bleed more easily. Cramp Bark may cause hypotension in large doses or even in average doses if given to previously hypotensive individuals. The bitter principle, viburnine, may cause gastroenteritis.