

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

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Prickly Pear -David Christopher MH

For this newsletter, you may wonder why I would pick a plant so local to my area of the country and may be irrelevant to a large number of subscribers. Well, this cactus is actually quite widespread. Most of us are aware that it can be abundant in the Southwest part of the United States, but in actuality this native American plant can be found anywhere between the Pacific Ocean (as far north as British Columbia) on the west and the Appalachian Mountains to the East.



The main use of this plant for me would be as a drawing poultice, after removing the barbs and outer skin. This filleted pad can then be placed right on contusions, bruises and burns to remove the damaged blood and disorganized interstitial trapped fluids. It is left on for several hours while it diffuses into the pad and then turned over and/or replaced with a new pad. The Aloe Vera like gel softens the skin and lessens the pain. A Prickly Pear pad could also be cut into smaller strips and placed between the gums and cheeks

for periodontal disease.

The flower petals can be used for varicose veins or any other capillary fragility, partly because of their high flavonoid content. Be careful in harvesting the flower petals and clean off any glochids that might have caught a ride. These glochids are spiny leaf hairs that incessantly get into your skin and are hard to remove.

When harvesting these cactus pads and fruit use heavy gloves and burn the prickles and hairs off. If a campfire or flame torch, isn't available grind them in the dirt to remove as much prickles as possible and then peel the skin with a good knife. Both are edible and the fruits are incredibly delicious. The juice from the pad has been effective in helping to control high blood sugar. You can save yourself a lot of trouble by purchasing them already skinned at a Latin Mercado.

For more information on desert plants I would recommend purchasing Michael Moore's Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West available at Christopher Publications.

David Christopher is a Master Herbalist and the director of The School of Natural Healing. He also co-hosts the popular radio show "A Healthier You" and is a popular international teacher and lecturer.