

Turkey Rhubarb (*Rheum Palmatum*) Benjamin Rouse, M.H.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked and underappreciated herbs in the herbal kingdom is that of the Turkey Rhubarb. Not to be confused with the common garden rhubarb (*rheum rhabarbarum*), the distinct and much larger medicinal variety of the herb is the epitome and personification of what Dr. Christopher taught herbs should be; both safe & effective.

It is gentle and mild enough to be used for small infants as a laxative tonic due to the milk-like quality of its action yet, potent enough to rid the body of old accumulated fecal matter within the intestinal tract. Dr. Christopher and a true vitalist taught that there is only one disease: constipation. When Elvis died, his colon was enlarged almost two and one half size the normal diameter and it was filled with "white, chalk-like fecal material." Turkey Rhubarb aids in the elimination of any impacted fecal material in the gut through its gentle cathartic action upon the bowels.

Originating in China, it dates back to 2700 B.C. where it was first mentioned in ancient writings and from there this medicinal Rhubarb was also known as Russian, Turkish and Chinese Rhubarb. In China, it was known as a purgative given in large enough dosage yet with no ill after effects that generally occur when purging the bowels.

Due to its astringent properties, it helps stop diarrhea because it helps tone the alimentary tract while it excites the peristalsis. This stomach tonic increases the absorption throughout the system by increasing both the flow of saliva and the flow of bile which not only improves the appetite but the action of the liver and flow of bile. If taken with 2 to 4 tablespoons of olive oil at night, it may be extremely suitable to someone with hemorrhoids to avoid the astringency.

This aperient grows best at 8,000 to 10,000 feet; however, I have it growing in my backyard here in upstate New York. So long as you give it enough water, some well-drained soil and well-rotted manure this perennial can grace your garden provided you can have the space for it as the leaves themselves can grow up to about 5 feet in length. My plant is only in its second year but I won't be able to harvest it until the sixth year where its medicinal actions come into effect as well as its loosely branched greenish-white flowers.

The chemical composition of this humble herb is actually so complex that leading experts still can't agree on its key principle action and how it affects the human body. Though not knowing on all the details of such a simple herb intricacies', it has been used for thousands of years through safe and effective means. Dr. Christopher has it in his Lower Bowel Formula as a complete food for the bowel. It is a staple in any herbalist cabinet and should be in the home for those looking to live a constipated-free and healthy life.

Benjamin J. Rouse is a Master Herbalist and a graduate of the School of Natural Healing. He lives with his family in upstate New York educating people about herbs and alternative health practices.



