

Blackberry, *Rubus Villosus* Aubrey Packham, M.H.

When I first noticed thorny blackberry leaves creeping into my backyard, I was not happy about their presence. But over the years I learned to value this great plant and am grateful it provides me not only with delicious fruit in the summer, but powerful wild medicine from its leaves and roots, too.

Nutritionally, blackberries are a reliable source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, vitamin K, and manganese (an essential mineral).¹ The plant is rich in tannin which makes it a good astringent and tonic.² The root and the leaves can be used as medicine. The root being more astringent.³ Recently, scientists studied 1500 foods measuring antioxidant activity (which is correlated with anti-cancer and anti-diabetic effects⁴). The results showed that fresh blackberry had more antioxidant activity than any other food tested!⁵

Dr. Christopher has mentioned blackberries a few times in his publications. He says that blackberries are beneficial for treating rheumatism (aka arthritis) and are a good blood builder.⁶ Dr. Christopher notes that historically, blackberry leaves have been used for burns and scalds; a tea is made for infant cholera and dysentery; and leaves and root bark to tone the stomach, intestines, larynx, and mucous tissues.⁷

One of the most common uses for blackberry leaves or root is for the treatment of diarrhea. Long-standing ulcers have been healed in the past with a fomentation of blackberry leaves. A decoction of the root bark is said to be useful in treating whooping cough in the spasmodic stage. Some folks even say that eating the young shoots will fasten loose teeth!⁸

And if blackberry doesn't grow near you, raspberry may be a good replacement. According to research, blackberry and raspberry were used interchangeably by the Greeks, Chinese, and Native Americans.⁹

I use blackberry leaves often to make a nourishing tea. It gives me a little extra energy and strength, which testifies to me of its reputation as a blood builder.

While this herb is underrepresented in today's pharmacopeia, it holds a high place in my apothecary due to its availability. I wish any readers all the best in discovering what medicine their backyard provides for them!

References

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Aubrey Packham is a Master Herbalist and uses her knowledge to help her family and friends with any ailments that arise. She loves learning about plants and their medicinal qualities. She lives with her family in North Carolina.