

Mistletoe *Viscum album* Jo Francks, M.H.

Mistletoe is a plant which grows out of the branches of trees making it a parasitic plant relying on the host tree for its nutrition. In the winter when the tree itself is dormant the mistletoe is a flourishing green. Because it was able to blossom in the frigid winter it became a symbol of fertility in the early centuries.

Mistletoe grows on many trees, especially apple trees, but rarely on oak trees. So, the legend goes that the druids revered the oak trees that mistletoe was growing on and considered it a gift from the Divine.

In the Scandinavian legend, Balder, the god of Peace, was slain with an arrow made of Mistletoe. He was restored to life at the request of the other gods and goddesses, and Mistletoe was afterwards given into the keeping of the goddess of Love, and it was ordained that everyone who passed under it should receive a kiss, to show that the branch had become an emblem of love and not of hate. We keep the tradition going this time of year by using Mistletoe in Christmas decorations. Anyone standing under the Mistletoe receives a kiss.

Medicinally Mistletoe has been called a cure all by some herbalists. It is currently revered as a powerful nervine and antispasmodic being used for epilepsy and convulsive disorders. Dr. Christopher taught that Mistletoe is highly valued for its nervine and antispasmodic properties, used anytime there is weakness or disorders of the nervous system. It will quiet, soothe and tone the nerves. It is also useful in female weakness and will incite uterine contractions. It tones the heart and is preferable to the powerful whipping action of digitalis or bromides in cardiac affection.

The leaves are the best part of the plant to use. There is some indication that the berries are poisonous but so far this is inconclusive. Also, it may be advised to not use Mistletoe if there is a condition of hypertension or high blood pressure. Since it is known to contract the uterus it is not advised to be used during pregnancy.

Viscum album is the European Mistletoe. The American variety is *Phoradendron flavescens* and has similar properties. Most information is for the European variety.

Mistletoe combines well with other nervine herbs and is one of the herbs in Dr. Christopher's Relax-Eze combination. It's a nice herb to use this time of year when there seems to be a lot of stress during the holidays.

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1. A Modern Herbal, Mrs. M. Grieve

