

Mallow

Kelly Pomeroy, M.H.

Soft, sweet, gooey marshmallows are a favorite treat around a summer campfire. Did you know that these sweet treats were originally created from the plant, *Althea officinalis*? Historically this plant was considered a delicacy among the Romans. The Chinese were also known to use this plant medicinally and Prosper Alpinus in 1592 said that the Egyptians were known to have eaten this plant as well. The French made a decadent confection in the 1800's with marshmallow, sugar, gelatin, and eggs that they called Pate de Guimauve. 1 This confection gradually turned into the summer campfire treat it is today.

Many people have lived off of *Althea officinalis* or it's family member, *Malva neglecta*, due to crop failures or lack of finances. Dr. Christopher said that you could live off of Mallows for a long period of time due to its high protein content. It is also high in lime, calcium, oxygen, and pectin, which is a great soluble fiber.2

Marshmallow, *Althea officinalis* is a very soothing and healing agent to inflamed respiratory, alimentary, intestinal, and genito-urinary systems. Dr. Christopher had a student whose son ridiculed his mother for studying herbs. One day after football practice he was doubled over in pain, unable to void his urine. After a while he begged her to help him by using her herbal remedies. She went out to get Marshmallow plant and before she made the tea, she felt he should chew on the root. Within seconds, he straightened up from a fetal position, headed for the bathroom, and voided his urine. He never teased his mother again for her herbal remedies. 2

Common mallow, *Malva neglecta* is a member of the same family as *Althea officinalis*. Often looked upon as a weed, don't be fooled, this plant has saved limbs and lives. *Malva neglecta* is both demulcent and mucilaginous, making it an effective soothing agent for both external and internal use.1

Dr. Christopher helped many whose legs were scheduled to be amputated or had horrible gangrene. With the use of *Malva neglecta*, made into a large tea, poultice, or fomentation, the gangrene was drawn out and legs were restored to health. Be sure to keep the application of tea, poultice or fomentation very warm. Dr. Christopher did intervals of 30 minutes hot tea and 5 minutes cold water for soaking limbs.1

A few years ago, my son had come into the house complaining of a "sliver." He jumped down from a tree and landed somewhat like a superhero, on bended knee. A twig, poking up out of the ground, lodged itself just below the knee and broke its tip off right at the skin. I was still going through my studies as an herbalist student and prayed for guidance. I even asked a paramedic in my neighborhood for help who recommended going to the hospital. My son was so uncomfortable. I tried tweezers, but the tip was so small that I couldn't get a hold of it. I had the impression to go make a tea of common mallow root from my backyard. I did 3 minutes of hot tea fomentation and 30 seconds of cold ice water fomentation. I did this for about 20 minutes and then tried to pull the twig with the tweezers. To my amazement, I was able to get a hold of a portion of the twig and pull the whole piece out! I later looked up the properties of Mallow and found it can help draw out slivers. What a blessing and comfort to me and my son!

Dr. Christopher was a keen observer of nature. He commented on how we try to obliterate these "weeds," but we should be grateful they grow back. We should honor them rather than obliterate them, as if the weeds were saying, "...here we come again; haven't you learned yet how we can help you?"

With the turmoil, chaos, and offense in our world today, we would be wise to follow the healing pattern of mallows. Even the words we choose to speak can be healing, soothing, remove offense, and calm an overwhelmed soul just as the plants we use can heal, soothe, remove offense and calm a troubled body.

References

1. "Marshmallow". *En.Wikipedia.Org*, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshmallow#cite_note-5. Accessed 7 July 2020.
2. Christopher, David, and Cathy Gileadi. *School Of Natural Healing Herb Syllabus*. Christopher Publications, 2010, pp. 372-380.

Kelly Pomeroy is a Master Herbalist graduate and Student Adviser for The School of Natural Healing. She is also a certified Foot Zoner and Foot Zone Instructor and loves continuing her education. She lives in Utah with her four children.