

## A Brief History of Goldenseal

Last Updated Tuesday, 19 June 2007

A Brief History of Goldenseal Goldenseal does not have the popularity of the ginseng plant, but the growing conditions are very similar. Many cultivators are rotating these two crops and have seen an increase in revenue and quality related to both of the plants. Goldenseal has a long history for its use among the Native Americans as a medicinal herb and as a dye. It is native to North America primarily east of the Mississippi. The Cherokee, Catawba, Iroquois and Kickapoo used goldenseal for a stimulant, a diuretic, to treat arrow wounds, as an insect repellent when mixed with bear grease and to produce a yellow dye. The Native American Indian shared their knowledge of goldenseal with the European immigrants. The settlers soon learned of its antiseptic and healing properties. The plant was then over harvested depleting the natural population of the plant. Folklore Goldenseal refers to the root scars from old growth which looks like the old seal or stamp used to seal envelopes. Some Native American tribes considered goldenseal a sacred herb, and used it extensively, not only for its healing powers and to stop bleeding, but as a paint or bright yellow dye and applied it to their faces, horses and weapons during ceremonial dances before going to war. It was believed by the early settlers that if they destroyed all the yellow root the Indians would not attack because they could not paint themselves. Traditional Uses The Cherokee used the root for inflammations, treatment of cancer, increase the appetite, and as a tonic to flush out sore eyes. The Iroquois used it for respiratory ailments, liver trouble, stomach and intestinal problems. The Kickapoo and Catawba found it helpful with wounds and ulcers. The early settlers soon found it useful for a whole array of ailments making it very much in demand for general better health. Goldenseal contains three active alkaloids, Hydrastine, Berberine and Canadine, along with some fatty oil, traces of essential oils and resin. It's actions are tonic, alterative, astringent, haemostatic, anti-inflammatory, anti-catarhal, mild laxative, muscular stimulant, oxytoic and bitter. Traditionally it was used for inflammatory mucous membranes, peptic ulcers, gastritis and colitis. In recent years it has gained acknowledgement as a herbal anti-biotic and immune system enhancer. It has been used to stimulate the uterus in which is sometimes used in childbirth. It is NOT recommended to be used without the supervision of a midwife or doctor skilled in herbal remedies. Goldenseal should not be used during pregnancy Current Uses of Goldenseal Goldenseal is found today in herbal products for the aid in upper respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, GI disorders including gastritis, liver disease, menorrhagia and dysmenorrhea. In a topical form it is used to treat ulcers, wounds, infections, itching, acne, dandruff, ringworm, skin rashes, sore gums, and herpes. It has been shown to have positive affects on alcoholics. Goldenseal should not be used if you have a history of high blood pressure, strokes, diabetes, glaucoma or heart disease. Description Goldenseal is a small perennial herb that has a horizontal, irregularly knotted, bright yellow root-stock, giving off slender roots below and marked with scars of the flower stems of previous years. The leaves and roots resemble the raspberry. The stem reaches 6-12 inches in height, is hairy with downward-pointing hairs. It bears 2 prominently-veined and wrinkled, dark green, hairy leaves, with 5-7 lobes and finely toothed. There is one solitary radical leaf on a long stalk, usually about 9 inches across. The flower is solitary, terminal, erect, small with 3 small greenish-white sepals blooms in April. The fruit follows the flower and is a large, fleshy, berrylike head, which when it ripens in the autumn, is bright red, resembling a large raspberry, and contains from 10-20 small, shining, hard, black seeds. The berry is ripe in July and is not edible. Growing region: Goldenseal can be found in the Eastern United States and Canada. It is common thru-out the Midwest and Appalachian region west to Arkansas. It is often found in rich moist woods with well drained soil.