

**A Guide To
Medicinal Plants Used By Latinos
In Madison, WI**



Second Edition

August 23, 2013

Introduction

This pamphlet describes some of the most frequently used medicinal plants by Latinos in Madison. It is the result of a project of Dr. David Kiefer (Research Fellow, UW Department of Family Medicine), with help from numerous other people.

The objective of this guide is to begin to collect Latino medicinal plant knowledge to serve as a future reference, and a resource for the public and medical community.

We hope that you find the information contained within to be useful and interesting!

Sections

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison: Result of interviews and focus groups conducted in 2012-2013

Scientific evidence supporting those uses: This section details the scientific evidence that might exist for the mentioned medicinal uses

Side effects: The most common and /or important

Drug interactions: The most important and common, though there may be more not mentioned here

Disclaimer

This pamphlet is meant to increase general knowledge about medicinal herbs in Madison, and should not be considered as specific advice intended for any particular individual. To the best of our knowledge, the information provided is accurate at the time of its publication. It is not intended as a medical manual, and neither the authors, the University of Wisconsin nor the publisher are engaged in providing medical or other professional advice to the individual reader and no ongoing relationship of any sort is implied nor offered. You should not use the information contained in this pamphlet as a substitute for the advice of a licensed health care professional. Because everyone is different, we urge you to see a licensed health care professional to diagnose problems and supervise the use of herbs to treat individual conditions.

Aloe

(Spanish name = sábila; scientific name = *Aloe vera* or *Aloe barbadensis*)



“Yes, there are countries that do not, but we use a lot of aloe in (Latin America)”

Uses Mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Hepatitis
- Kidney stones
- Skin burns
- Dermatitis
- Gastritis

Scientific Evidence For Those Uses

- Colitis
- Skin damage caused by radiotherapy for cancer
- Wound healing
- Burns, psoriasis, herpes labialis (cold sores)
- Constipation

Side Effects

- Stomach pain, diarrhea
- Reduced potassium

Prescription Drug Interactions

- Diabetes medications (could cause hypoglycemia)
- Anesthesia: sevoflurane

Chamomile

(Spanish name = manzanilla; scientific name = *Matricaria recutita*)



“I take chamomile and mint tea every morning and with every meal.”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Insomnia or anxiety
- Gas
- Indigestion, gastritis, childhood colic, stomach ache
- Heartburn, acid reflux
- Cough

Scientific Evidence For Those Uses

- Colic, Indigestion
- Mouth ulcers

Side Effects (the most common)

- Allergies in people sensitive to other plants in the Asteraceae plant family (“daisies”)

Prescription Drug Interactions

- Sedative drugs (additional effect)
- Via liver metabolism: amitriptyline, haloperidol, ondansetron, propranolol, theophylline, verapamil, lovastatin, ketoconazole, itraconazole, fexofenadine, triazolam, others
- Tamoxifen
- Warfarin

Clove

(Spanish name = clavo; scientific name = *Syzygium aromaticum* (synonym *Eugenia aromatica*))



"It takes away toothache."

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Tooth pain

Scientific Evidence For Those Uses

- Tooth pain

Side Effects (the most common)

- Allergic/contact dermatitis
- Asthma
- Excessive consumption may cause liver or brain damage

Prescription Drug Interactions

- Anticoagulants
- Antiplatelets
- Immunosuppressants

Eucalyptus

(Spanish name = eucalipto; scientific name = *Eucalyptus globulus*)



"(We use) eucalyptus for everything."

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Cough
- Chills
- Flu
- Phlegm

Scientific Evidence For Those Uses

- Decongestant
- Headache (topical)
- Arthritis
- Asthma

Side Effects (the most common)

- Allergic contact dermatitis
- Avoid directly consuming concentrated oils due to liver toxicity, though vapor can be harmful (neurotoxicity, and respiratory irritation)
- Avoid use with children or pregnant women

Prescription Drug Interactions

- Diabetic medications
- Sedatives

Garlic

(Spanish name = ajo; scientific name = *Allium sativum*)



“My father would usually have garlic every morning before breakfast, like a pill. His grandfather used it to prevent many diseases.”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Cancer
- Infections
- Blood pressure
- Heart disease, high cholesterol, chest angina
- Rheumatism
- Anticoagulant

Scientific Evidence For Those Uses

- High blood pressure
- Arteriosclerosis
- Colds (flu), Chronic bronchitis

Side Effects (the most common)

- Allergic reaction of the skin
- Large amounts cause heartburn

Drug Interactions

- Antiviral drugs (eg, amprenavir, atazanavir, fosamprenavir, indinavir, iopnavir, and others)
- Aspirin, psuedoephedrine

Lemon Grass

(Spanish name = hierba luisa; scientific name = *Cymbopogon citratus*)



“We use lemon grass in Peru.”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Gas (especially for children)
- Digestive aid
- Stomach pain

Scientific evidence for those uses

- Analgesic
- Antioxidant

Side Effects (the most common)

- Concentrated extracts (e.g. essential oil) may cause skin reactions or irritation upon swallowing

Drug Interactions

- None documented

Mullein

(Spanish name = gordolobo; scientific name = *Verbascum thapsus*)



“I take mullein for stomach ache”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Stomach ache

Scientific evidence for those uses

- Inflammation of the respiratory tract, kidneys, and pelvic area
- Bronchitis
- Asthma
- Ear pain

Common adverse effects

- Potential liver toxicity
- Hypersensitivity (allergy to mullein)

Likely pharmaceutical interactions

- Anticoagulants due to coumarins in mullein
- Not recommended in pregnancy and lactation due to lack of studies supporting that use.

Oregano

(Spanish name = orégano; scientific name = *Origanum vulgare*)



“Oregano as well, they give to infants as a tea for colic”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Stomach pain (tea)
- Colic (tea)
- Ingredient in soups

Scientific evidence for those uses

- Intestinal parasites
- Respiratory problems
- Gastrointestinal problems

Side Effects (the most common)

- Miscarriage: in doses higher than food amounts
- Allergic reaction

Drug Interactions

- Diabetes medications
- Antidepressants
- Immunosuppressants
- May block iron, zinc and copper absorption in the body

Peppermint

(Spanish name = hierba buena, yerba buena, menta;
scientific name = *Mentha x piperita*)



“Oh, yes, spearmint is also very good. I have a plant at home.”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- As food (in broth)
- Indigestion
- Gastritis
- Headache (applied to temples)

Scientific evidence for those uses

- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Anti-spasmodic (intestinal)

Side Effects (the most common)

- Dermatitis
- Heartburn

Drug Interactions

- A possible interaction with cyclosporine via liver metabolism

Prickly Pear

(Spanish name = nopal; scientific name = *Opuntia* spp.)



“Nopal is also very good for diabetes.”

“Also in the long term, taken on a daily basis, for burning fat.”

Uses mentioned by Latinos in Madison

- Diabetes
- Burning fat
- Improve circulation (combined with celery)
- Pineapple enhances efficacy

Scientific evidence for those uses

- Diabetes

Side Effects (the most common)

- Laxative effects, diarrhea
- Abdominal swelling

Drug Interactions

- Reduces absorption of medications due to polysaccharide content
- May enhance effect of diabetes medications
- May enhance effect of cholesterol medications

Other plants

The hope is to continue this project, adding to the number of plants included in this guide and, eventually, to explore the use of medicinal plants by people of other cultures.

Other plants mentioned in the interviews:

- Cinnamon
- Mint
- Many more!

Acknowledgements

There are many people who made this project possible.

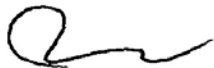
Of course the Latino community of Madison and the participants in the focal groups and interviews, helped me a great deal. I learned much from them and it was a pleasure to get to know them. I thank them for their time and willingness to confide and share with me their knowledge and wisdom.

Dr. Patricia Tellez-Girón, who, from the very beginning, helped and supported me to organize this project.

At the University of Wisconsin, thanks to Dr. Bruce Barrett, MD, Eve Emshwiller, PhD, Andrew Gardner, PhD, Jane Bradbury, Maria Paulina Duarte, Katelyn Crowley, Katie Ray, MD, Mariela Quesada Centeno, and Yolanda Arguelles Yoho. This project would not have been possible without their help!

Finally, thanks to the plants that give us their healing powers and options for treatment when there may be no other alternatives.

In health,



David Kiefer, MD

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