

# ALOE VERA

## Common Names:

Aloe, Aloe Vera, Indian Alces, Kumari, Ghirita, Gawarpaltra, Barbados aloe, Curacao aloe, Lu hui

## Botanical Name:

*Aloe barbensis/capensis/vera*

## History:

Aloe use goes back to the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, when it was used for treating the skin and for its laxative properties. It was known to the Greeks and mentioned by the Greek physician, Dioscorides as early as the fourth century B.C.

## Where it's grown:

Aloe is thought to have originated in the Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula. Today the species is cultivated and found in northern Africa, Asia and the Southern Mediterranean region. The plant is also cultivated in the West Indies and other subtropical regions.

## Looks like:

Aloe is a succulent plant belonging to the Lily family. It has perennial, strong and fibrous roots, numerous leaves that are fleshy and that narrow or taper from the root up. The edges of the leaves usually have spiny teeth. Many species are woody and branching. In remote areas of Africa aloes have been discovered 30 to 60 feet high with stems as much as 10 feet in circumference, although usually they grow to approximately 2 feet long and three inches in circumference.

## Parts used:

The medicinal part of the plant is the dried juice of the leaves, the latex and the Aloe Vera gel, which is the leaf pulp, a thin clear jelly-like substance gathered from the inner portion of the leaves.

## Active components:

Anthraquinone, Barbaloin, glycosides, resins B, C, and D, polysaccharides, sterols, gelonins, chromones, salicylic acid, almost all vitamins and about 20 essential amino acids.

## Use:

For centuries Aloe, recognized as an analgesic, has been used as a soothing topical remedy for minor burns and wounds. It continues to be used for treating sunburns and other skin conditions such as scrapes and insect bites as it appears to speed healing and prevent inflammation. The aloe plant is best known for its healing Aloe Vera gel, a thin, clear, jellylike substance. This gel is used to treat minor surface irritations, to reduce psoriasis symptoms, to lessen the painful effects of shingles, and to shrink warts. It also has a reputation as a beauty aid and is a common ingredient in cosmetics and lotions, as well as shampoos and conditioners. This is due to its ability to naturally balance the pH of the skin.

Another substance extracted from the plant is the Aloe Vera latex, which is taken internally as a laxative but which, due to its high potency, is usually combined with gentler herbs. Still further studies are being done on the use of aloe to enhance the immune system as it may potentially boost immunity, fight the HIV virus, treat certain types of cancer (particularly leukemia) and manage diabetes.

