Wood Betony Stachys Officinalis (Betonia O., Stachys Betonia)

"Betony is good, whether for man's soul or for his body."
– Apuleius Platonicus (c.550-625)

"Venda la tonica e compra betonica"
"Sell your coat and buy betony"
– Roman proverb

"He has more virtues than betony"
– a Spanish & Italian complement

"...this is a precious herb, well worth keeping in your house."
- Nicholas Culpeper, 17th century English physician

"There is no illness brought on by cold in which Betony cannot be used effectively."
- John Sauer, American Colonial herbalist doctor

"Throughout many centuries, faith in Betony's virtues as a panacea for all ills was thoroughly ingrained in the popular estimation" - Maude Grieve, A Modern Herbal 1932

"For when you don't feel quite well but are not sure of the problem."
“A harmonizing restorative”

Common Names:
lis bheathag, or Life Plant (Gaelic), Betony, Purple Betony, (Common) Hedge-nettle, Bishopswort, Wild Hop, Betoine (French) Betonie (German)

Etymology:
Genus name Stachys comes from Greek meaning "an ear of grain" referring to the spike inflorescence that looks like an ear of corn or grain. Betony comes from the Celtic words bew ('head') and ton ('good') meaning 'good head' curing all head problems be they physical or mental. Betony which was also called Ventonica in Roman times is also thought to be derived from the Vettones, an ancient Iberian Celtic tribe, who used and passed on the use of the herb. Romans thought the Vettones possessed “special medicinal magic that drove away bad spirits” as did Betony.

Plant Family: Lamiaceae (mint family)
Parts Used: Aerial parts, leaves or flowering tops. Some practices used the roots along with the herbs

Botany:
Stachys officinalis is perennial native to Europe and Asia, growing wild in meadows and grasslands, open woods, edges of woods and in hedgerows throughout Europe, England (though less so in Scotland and Ireland) and also in Asia as far east as the Caucasus Mountains.

Betony has many of the defining characteristics of the Mint family, including stiff, square stems up to 1-2 ft tall, and purple/pink tubular, two-lipped flowers whorled about the end of the stem in a spike. The opposite leaves are primarily clustered in a basal rosette of rough, serrated and hairy oblong to heart-shaped leaves. A few leaves clasp the stem in opposite pairs between the base and the flower spike. It has a woody root.

S. palustris (marsh betony, woundwort) and S. sylvatica (Hedge wound-wort) are other stachys that are closely related and used for their many vulnerary actions. The Chinese and Japanese use one of the betonies, Stachys sieboldii (known as Chinese Artichoke) to relieve colds and flu and eat its tuber.
**Note:** Pedicularis spp (Lousewort) which is native to North America also goes by the name Wood Betony or Betony in the US, so it is important to use the botanical name and ensure you have the correct plant. While both Stachys and Pedicularis are in the mint family and considered nervines, they are not interchangeable in their actions.

**Cultivation:**
Wood Betony is not widely naturalized in the United States, but is easily grown from seed, root divisions or cuttings and spreads by creeping stems (stolons) that root as they go along the ground. It prefers partial sun, dappled shade, (particularly light afternoon shade in hot, humid climates) and evenly moist soil (though established plants are fairly drought tolerant) but it is not picky and thrives on neglect. Plant 12-18” apart for use as a ground cover.

**Harvest:**
Harvest leaves just before flowering (traditional practice) and also shortly before or shortly after the flowers open in July. But all aerial parts are often gathered when in bloom in July and August. Old practices also gathered the root of this once common plant, but aerial parts are what is known to be most effective and preserve the perennial plant.

“This plant is very wholesome and so you must gather it in the month of August without using a tool made of iron; and when you have gathered it, shake off the dirt so that none sticks to it and then dry very thoroughly in the shade. Then, together with its roots, make it into a powder, then use it and taste it when you need to.” — Apuleius Platonicus (c.550-625 also in Old English Herbarium)

**Medicine Preparation:**
Tincture: 1:5 dry plant in 50% alcohol. Also extracted in in tonic wines and brewed in to beer (Greive mentions that the fresh leaves can have an intoxicating effect)
Tea: dried herbs in standard tea infusion. Dried herb is also used in smoking mixtures and as a powder (capsules)
Topically: prepare as a poultice, salves, liniments or washes. Also prepared as an electuary and infused in vinegar

**Major Constituents:**
Most active constituents are thought to be: Betaine, betulinic-acid, caffeic acid, chlorogenic acid, harpagide, rosmarinic acid, stachyride, tannins flavonoids (also containing: Diterpenoid lactone, betolide, iridoids, betonicin, stachydrine, trigonelline, achillein, apigenin, coumarins)

**Cultural Traditions and Uses**
It is no exaggeration to say that Wood Betony is the most revered and used polycrest medicine herbs of Europe and western Asia since prehistory up until modern times. It has been used for thousands of years somewhat like a panacea until this last generation when it fell out somewhat mysteriously of more common use.

The ancient Celtic tribes of Europe were noted for their prominent use of the herb and called it lis bheathag “Life Plant” and bew-ton “Good Head” (The later becoming its common name betony. It was a sacred herb of the Druids. Greek myth recounts that Asclepius, Greek god of medicine, discovered Betony. The ancient Greeks praised its healing powers while also using it for protection against evil.

One of the early references to Betony in writing is thought to have been in the 1st cent BC by the Greek botanist and Roman physician Antonius Musa, in a medical treatise...
devoted to the herb and called *De Herba Vettonica*, where 47 diseases that Betony can cure is listed. But this ancient herbal is now thought to have been written in the 4th century by the Roman medical writer Theodorus Priscianus (which is still a good long time ago). Betony does feature in the medical writings of both Dioscorides and Pliny the Elder. The 1st century Myddfai Physicians of Wales were equally familiar with Stachys’ virtues. They noted:

“[If the juice] is boiled in white wine and drunk, it will cure the colic and the swelling of the stomach. Pounding it small, expressing the juice and apply it with a feather to the eye of a man will clear and strengthen his sight, and remove specks from his eye. The juice is a good thing to drop into the ears of those who are deaf...[The dried plant powder when mixed with honey could help get rid of coughs and] benefit many diseases of the lungs.”

The Greek herbalist Apuleius Platonicus (or Pseudo-Apuleius) (c.550-625) recommended Stachys Officinalis as “good, whether for man’s soul or for his body. It shields him against visions and dreams, and the wort is very wholesome.” His *Herbarium Apulei* became was one of the most widely used remedy books of the Middle Ages by European and Arab Unani Tibb physicians, who also used betony in their materia medica.

While ancient records outline numerous medicinal applications, they seem to pale at Betonica’s use in a folk healing practices for a host of conditions—so much so that wood betony was an herbal panacea for close to two thousand years. The plant was so closely aligned with the practice of herbalism in Europe that it image was the well-recognized sign (ie ‘logo’) for an herbalist and hung outside their clinics and apothecaries. If one came upon herd times the oft-said advice, “Sell your coat and buy betony” became a proverb. And its place of high esteem is more than evident in the also in the complement of a good person, “He has as many virtues as betony.”

Wood Betony was used as much as for a medicine for the spirit as it was for the body. It was long used as a protection against sorcery, ghosts and evil spirits, nightmares and despair, and also to ward off those who have ill intentions. So was often plant in church graveyards and worn as an amulet. Even the Renaissance Humanist, Erasmus, commented that it protected “those that carried it about them.” He also said that it was good as protection against having “fearful visions.” If troubled by nightmares, betony was placed under the pillow for protection. A snuff of Betony was used to provoke intense sneezing which they believed purified the body along with cleaning out the sinuses. Wood betony was also burned with Saint John’s Wort in midsummer bonfires (and then jump through the smoke to purify the body of ills and evil.)

The *Anglo Saxon Herbal* recommends its use to prevent bad dreams. (‘frightful nocturnal goblins and terrible sights and dreams’). Similarly, a Welsh charm prescribes: “To prevent dreaming, take the leaves of betony, and hang about your neck, or else drink the juice on going to bed.” German herbalist Wolf Storl notes, “It was the most beloved of the bewitching herbs. It was boiled in water and used to bathe children and pets who were possessed or bewitched; the bathwater washed away the bad magic.

A 10th century herbal, recommended betony was useful for curing sick elves. 7
The 11th century abbess Hildegard von Bingen also used Wood Betony “against the malicious effects of the devil, by crushing the plant and poulticing the chest overnight. She also says that anyone who is troubled by ‘false dreams’ should take Betony leaves to his bed. She also quotes its use for men or women who have been “deceived by some magic art” and find themselves insane with love, *they have only to place a leaf in each nostril, under the tongue, in each hand and under each foot*”… This small close to the earth woodland plant offers a centered, grounded strength. No wonder it is “used throughout the ages as a protective force to keep someone grounded, “on-earth” and keep their sense of gut instinct strong in order to protect them from “evil” or unsafe situations.”

The 17th century English physician Nicholas Culpeper continued it use, “...it preserves the liver and bodies of men from the danger of epidemical diseases, and from witchcraft also” and “…this is a precious herb, well worth keeping in your house.” He also states that Betony is **astrologically** ruled by Jupiter and Aries.

While in America Stachys officinalis never naturalized much to speak of, it was known and used. Both the colonial herbalist Sauer, and the physiomedicalist Lyle wrote of Wood Betony’s medicinal uses. But Eclectics did not seem much aware of its, and for mysterious reasons, it has fallen off to the sidelines in the modern herbal renewal. (Some suggest that herbs of such its global and gentle tonic properties are less used in modern herbalism) But such a profoundly restoring tonic cannot long remain unsung, and it is being rediscovered and applied anew for its manifold healing virtues.

**Wood Betony as Medicine - Outline of Uses & Indications**

**Tissue State:** Atrophy, Constriction.

**Taste:** Astringent, Bitter, Sweet (a difficult to describe taste)

**Energetics Qualities:**

Drying and mildly warming and mildly cooling (like other aromatic mints mostly warming)

(drying, tightening, toning, building of tissue integrity). Culpepper deems it “hot and dry in the 2nd degree.” Other sources state that it is cold and dry, probably due to its bitter properties. Betony “is probably warming in the first degree and feels cooling to people with very hot constitutions or very hot conditions, but the nature of the herb is neutral to warm, without being overly heating.”

**Actions:**


**Tissue Affinities:**

Nerve, brain, mucous membranes, gastrointestinal tract, liver/gall bladder, muscular, vascular, reproductive system uterus, and in wound healing.

**Doses:**

**Infusion:** 1 cup 3x a day  **Tincture:** 2 - 6 ml 3x daily as long as needed. Low drop doses are also effective in their sedative relaxing and grounding effects.

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Specific Indications

ø Broad acting panacea and tonic: improving any condition to which it is administered for general weaknesses; Consider Betony “for when you don’t feel quite well but are not sure of the problem.” Its “gentle mild properties that make it so beneficial in so many conditions without being overly insistent in its action.”

Nervous System & Head

ø Troporestorative to the nervous system and nervous tissues, especially with weakness and deficiency; nourishing and building the vital energy with regular use.

ø Head maladies & injuries: concussion, stroke, disorientiation, hysteria, frenzy, impaired vision “Betony was once the sovereign remedy for all maladies of the head…” [Grieve]

ø Headaches: Alleviates tension and migraine (prevention as well as acute treatment), hormonal migraines, pain to a frenzy, and for general deficient circulation in the brain Herbalist Jim McDonald finds that it “act(s) in a decidedly restorative manner. I have noted several instances where, in addition to its immediate effects, regular daily use of Wood Betony as a simple has decreased the frequency and intensity of chronic headaches until their occurrence was drastically reduced or even eliminated altogether.” “To address the acute the "ow" is happening now.”

“Liver Yang (fire) rising” “Holmes specifically mentions the use of Wood Betony for headaches with liver yang rising with associated vision disturbances and high blood pressure.” Wood Betony has a downward grounding and calming energy. (Combines well with skullcap and self heal for these actions)

ø Wood Betony combines very well with other herbs. One example of a headache formula: “equal parts tinctures of Wood Betony, Black Cohosh and Jamaican Dogwood. “I have seen this formula work remarkably to stave off an oncoming migraine, if taken in small frequent intervals as soon as the first indications of its coming are felt. It will often work if taken after the migraine has taken hold, but is a bit less effective, and at times ineffective altogether.” Another “supreme cooling nerve formula for burnt out nervous exhaustion with heat rising into headaches and also treating anxiety, depression, fear, tension, bursts of anger and heartburn” mixes stachys with scutellaria, centella and rosa. Other and synergistic herbs include Scullcap and Lavender and Gingko See recipe below for tasty herbal tonic wine with hyssop and vervain for nervous headaches and mental tension or other emotional disorders. Maude Grieve recommended smoking wood betony with Coltsfoot and Eyebright for headaches. I formulated wood betony with gotu kola and rhodiola and it was an effective restorative for mental decline for an elder (rosemary or gingko could also be added as called for)

ø Neuralgia & shingles: (well combined with Saint John’s Wort) Medical research suggests this use for facial neuralgia especially that caused by medical treatment or therapy Parkinson’s disease (wood) fainting

ø Head and Nerve Injuries. Betonica (torture, pain, hysteria, frenzy, head injury) (Wood) weak and nervous

ø Pain: A traditional remedy for many kinds of pain, particularly headaches), Hot wood betony infusion can be drunk during a difficult or painful labor to alleviate the pain.

ø Vertigo, Dizziness (Wood) lack of groundedness,

Mental and Emotional

ø Psychiatric imbalances: “Paramount among its virtues is its unique efficacy in… treating disorganization centered in the head and mind (which is to say both the physical and energetic).” Wood betony excels in releasing stress and tension from the mind and body

ø Anxiety, mental exhaustion, hysteria
Hysteria, delirium, insanity or seizures: In ancient times such symptoms were known as demonic possession or witchcraft, *Trauma PTSD by Matt Wood*

Depression: It’s ability to both relax and gently stimulate is particularly helpful with depression, particularly those with tension, Matt Wood recommends it for “depression due to burn-out.” Larken Brune uses it for depression with a Cold/ Dry/ Depleted/ Tense quality

Insomnia, if caused by anxiety and tension and “churning thoughts that just won’t stop.”

Dreams: Taken traditionally or used as an amulet at bedtime to protect from disturbing dreams and nightmares. And it offers its protective relaxing energy in evening teas. One dream tea formula: 1 part Linden 1/2 part Wood Betony 1/2 part Passionflower, pinch of Mugwort [citation forthcoming]

Memory and concentration: “improves circulation much like Gingko, but more effective. In combination with its calming effect, it is excellent for exams and other stressful situations that require focus.” It’s invigorating, tonifying, and nerve properties combine to make it a wonderful herb for the elderly and those recovering from long illness.

Grounding: helps us be here...Incarnating energy. “Come Down To Earth With Wood Betony” [Wood] For those experience an UFO or fairy land abductee, or lack of groundedness, a feeling of disconnection from the world. “helps connect one to their gut instincts and grounds overly nervous, flighty individuals.”

**Digestive System**

Digestive system tonic: strengthens and restores tone to the solar plexus in particular and digestive track tissues in general. Improves circulation and harmonizes the functions of the digestive system “Its material properties of astringency and mild bitterness have long made it a valued wound and digestive remedy” stomach weakness, pain, burning, mild ulceration nervous stomach gas with anxiety, nervous diarrhea

Associated with the solar plexus region and use for weak solar plexus with stomach problems, gastritis, gastralgia weakness

Warming bitter carminative: one of the few! Both Anne McIntyre and Matthew Wood find it effective for balancing food cravings. The *trigonelline constituent* may be the helpful source of this action

Stimulate weak digestion while its also soothes and calms: *dyspepsia, indigestion, weak and cold digestion, and catarrh or phlegmatic, damp conditions by stimulating gastric secretions* it is bitter, stimulating, relaxing, and tonifying to all the mucous membranes, but is specifically felt in the digestive tract

Gas, diarrhea or constipation, heartburn, bloating weak gallbladder reflexes, Jaundice, leaden complexion with weakness of gallbladder reflexes stomach upset (dyspepsia)

Eating disorders or emaciated and depleted. It stimulates the appetite and supports calmness of mind while grounding.
Tonic to the membranes of the body astringent, this beneficial effect is due to the high level of tannins present in the herb. This property of the wood betony makes it very effective in alleviating problems such as diarrhea and in treating various irritations affecting the mucous membranes in the body.

Also traditionally used for worms (by Culpepper and gypsy herbalist Juliette de Bairacli-Levy) and parasites (mild but notable in its action)

Respiratory System

Expectorant: weak cough reflexes; warming and drying expectorant, good for damp coughs brought on by cold. fever, colds, sore throat, chest complaints,

Respiration: coughs, wheezing. Other: anemia, bedwetting.

Cutaneous System

Wounds: astringent “staunch bleeding” both internal and external. It has been historically poulticed over injuries of all sorts, and deemed specific to concussion, stroke and facial neuralgia

Also useful in addressing bloody wounds… “It is mentioned as a poultice for any sort of wound, either fresh or old and festering.” Maude Grieve noted that Stags, if wounded by a arrow or lance, would seek out betony to eat and heal.

similar wound healing properties as yarrow and is excellent as a wash for burns. The infusion can be used as an herbal wash to bathe and clean leg ulcers and other wounds especially if they are infected

Hemorrhoids, varicosities, bruises or mouth sores. Culpepper and Grieves also tell us it is of benefit in the spitting of blood.

insects bites bruises, skin ulcers: Traditional used for rashes bites of mad dogs or venomous snakes much need in ancient times cuts,.

Reproductive System

Uterine-stimulant-relaxant tonic: PMS, lack of period, menstrual cramps ( tea with mixed with equal parts of chamomile) Emmenagogue for both excessive bleeding and “sluggish menses” Culpepper primarily mentions it for ‘bringing down the women’s courses,” and useful in “falling down of the mother,” likely referring to prolapsed uterus, “due to its action in improving circulation and muscular tone of the uterus, and its astringent tonic properties. it definitely releases liver qi that might effect the menses (not specifically uterine qi), and that it is an effective antispasmodic and relaxant for menstrual cramps and emotional tension.

Birthing Labor: Culpepper recommended it in childbirth to “ensure an easy and speedy delivery” while avoided in pregnancy Betony tea can be drunk during the last 3 weeks of pregnancy (some suggest last trimester ) to ease anticipation, even hysteria, and strengthen muscular tone in preparation for labor; Hot wood betony infusion can be drunk during a weak, difficult labor and also a painful labor to alleviate the pain. One Russian study showed that it also increased women’s ability to produce milk when breast-feeding

Impotence: due to weakness (Wood)

Muscular – Skeletal System

Weak Muscles: strengthening (Wood) relaxes tense muscles (particularly in head and neck)

Rheumatism & Gout: acts as an alterative over time in rheumatic patients; Betony was an ingredient of "Pistoja powder," an old remedy for arthritis and gout.

Urinary System

Urinary tract weakness: helpful for dribbling of urine and general bladder weakness. Gerard wrote in 1597, "It maketh a man to pisse well."

Cardiovascular System

Relaxes blood pressure reduces palpitations, contains flavonoids & glycosides that have a hypotensive action.

Circulatory stimulant in brain - well combined with gotu kola, rosemary and gingko

Also used for blood poisoning in ancient times

Spiritual

Traditionally sed in European shamanic/spiritual practices and is an aid to meditation

Protection: Strengthens gut instincts and is grounding (incarnating) As was practiced in ancient times, herbalist Jim McDonald finds Wood Betony worn an amulet to be effective as for repelling negative energy or evil of a non-supernatural nature

Grounding helpful for those who are “spacey” and not connected to their body and the earth.

Other Uses

Elder years, Longevity tonic: effective for Loss of memory in old age; (As noted above, a formula wood betony with gotu kola and rhodiola and it was a effective restorative for mental decline for an elder and other circulatory stimulants such as rosemary or gingko could also be added as called for. I find it helps elders (as well as the young) engage with life. But Betony is also well used for other year challenges dribbling of urine, weak muscles general weakness, and the anxiety and depression that can sometimes accompany old age.

Mouth: astringent properties, treats irritations affecting the throat, the mouth, and the gums. Infusion can used as a gargle or mouthwash to treat oral and throat disorders.

yellow dye for hair or wool: fresh leaves yield the yellow dye and are used to give to grey hair a blonde tint.

Contraindications & Cautions:

Stachys Officinalis is contraindicated in pregnancy due to being a uterine stimulant

The Botanical safety Handbook listed no known contraindications and drug and supplement interactions but one other reference contraindicated its use if one has an allergy to NSAIDS. And mentioned excessive large doses may cause vomiting for some.

Wood Betony as Flower Essence

Wood Betony (Stachys officinalis) [Delta Gardens] – Helps clarify deeper meanings of relationship, friendship and sexuality; for those who prefer to be alone but are working on authentic ways to connect with others. For those who feel unable to change or control behavior, cynical about ability of self and others to change. Stimulates higher reasoning to guide one in situations. One feels less trapped and controlled by desires that do not align with his or her self-concept

Wood Betony (Stachys officinalis) [Healing Spirits herb farm] – Used for lack of groundedness, those old wycked spirits. It help put you at more ease with people. Brings a sense of physical and emotional well being. Strong sense of mental clarity and focus from the gut level instinct.

Wood Betony (Stachys officinalis) [Lichenwood essences] – provides groundedness, especially when the person is in a delusional or paranoid state. Wood Betony helps to center and calm. This essence is helpful in anxiety disorders.

Wood Betony (Stachys officinalis) [Fox Mountain] – Sexuality, Sensuality. Allows one to feel and be felt on all levels. Giving and receiving; The importance of dual energies to create inspired action; Use for unbalanced interest in sexuality. Harmonious expression: A balanced flow of sexual energy, the ability to be sensual. A healthy relationship with sex; A harmonious expression of one’s sexuality.
Inharmonious Expression: An overly focused interest in sex; Trouble with integrating love into one’s sexuality.

“Anne McIntyre associates the flower essence of Wood Betony with the head and pineal gland, and strengthens a sense of inner calm, and strengthens the desire for higher principals. She specifically mentions its use in managing the balance between sexual energy and desire and the higher goals of the mind and spirit and useful both for celibacy and in tantric practices.”

Herbalist Brigitte Mars experiences the flower essence of wood betony as “enhanc[ing] pineal gland function, thus improving the user’s sense of well being. It fosters a desire for higher principals and inner calm and can be useful for those deal with excessive sexual energy.”

**Wood Betony as Food & Drink**

Betony makes a pleasant infusion, with a slight spicy/aromatic flavor that is difficult to describe, many use it as a substitute for black tea, but it is well used in numerous drink preparations beyond tea such as herbal ferments, wines and brew in a beer mix.

It is not often added to foods but the young leave and shoots of all Stachys can be eaten raw or cooked. A few of the fresh leaves and/or flowers can be added to salads to stimulate the digestive system, but they add a mildly bitter taste, so should it is best finely shredded.

While the bitter roots of *Stachys officinalis* are not edible (and can make one throw up), related species of wood betony do have edible tubers. “Most notably, *Stachys affinis*, commonly called Chinese artichokes or Crosnes (named for the French town they were first cultivated in the west) is considered a hard-to-get (and costly) in gourmet delicacy. In Chinese and Japanese cuisine, the Chinese artichoke is primarily pickled. In particular, its tuber is a part of Osechi, cooked for celebrating Japanese New Year. Dyed red by leaves of red shiso after being pickled, it is called **chorogi**, native name being **Tsanyungtzu**, while in Japan it is called **Chorogi**. It was introduced as a culinary vegetable by the late Dr. M. T. Masters, F.R.S., in 1888. The tubers are eaten more in France than in this country. In French cuisine, its cooked tuber is often served alongside dishes named **japonaise** or Japanese-styled.”

It was brought to NYC and can be cultivate in the area, though it isn’t yet well known. Also, the tubers *Stachys palustris*, Marsh Woundwort are said to be a tasty edible and can be dried powdered and made into bread flour, and the young shoots are cooked and eaten like asparagus. It grows in northeast quadrant of the US. Yet another edible is *Stachys hyssopifolia*, Hyssop leaf Hedge-nettle which grows on east coast as well as Kentucky, Indiana, illinois, Iowa and Michigan. Seeds of the *Stachys scopulorum* were eaten by natives in the desert southwest of North America and *Stachys sylvatica* is consumed in Europe.

**Wood Betony Nerve Tonic Wine**

“Relieves anxiety, nervous headaches and stress. Older herbalists prescribed it for “hysteries” and other nervous disorders. Take ¼ cup to relieve nervous headaches, stress etc. This has Taste and is a Treat(ment).” [citation forthcoming]

**Ingredients**
- 1 bottle white wine
- 50 gr wood betony
- 25 gr vervain
- 25 gr hyssop

Combine all the ingredients into a glass bottle and leave to stand in a sunny place such as a windowsill for two weeks.

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**Wood Betony Beer**

from julie hatfeild (see also stehen Buhner) She recommends this beer for hot weather and as a spring tonic

- 1 oz each Wood Betony, Agrimony, Meadowsweet
- 1 gallon water
- 2 lbs sugar

Boil together 15 min, strain, and work with yeast or barm and bottle for later use

**Sources:**


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2. Matthew Wood, _Book of Herbal Wisdom_ & _Earthwise Herbal vol 1_
3. Jim McDonald, _Wood betony_ blog post
4. Anne McIntyre, _Flower Power_
6. Stephen Harrod Buhner, _Sacred and Healing Herbal Beers_
7. Bonsor Wilfrid, "Magical Practices against Elves"
   _Folklore, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec. 31, 1926), pp. 350-363_
8. Maude Grieve, _A Modern Herbal_
9. Brigitte Mars, [more citations forthcoming]

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Wood betony is in its prime in May. In June and July is bloom display, A fine bright red does this grand plant adorn, To gather it for drink I think no scorn; I’ll make a conserve of its fragrant flowers, Cephalick virtues in this herb remain, To chase each dire disorder from the brain. Delirious persons here the cure may find To stem the phrensy and calm the mind. All authors own wood betony good. “Tis King o’erall the herbs that deck the wood; A Kings physician erst such notice took Of this, he on its virtues wrote a book.”

- James Chambers, _The Poor Phytologist_

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In the mountains and woods, in the meadows and depths of the valleys—
Almost everywhere, far and wide, grows the precious abundance
Of betony. Yet I have it too in my garden, and there
It learns a softer way of life in the tended soil.
So great is the honor this genus has won for its name
That if my Muse wished to add to it she would find herself
Defeated at last, overwhelmed; and soon she would see
She could add nothing more to the value it has already.
Perhaps you pick it to use it green, perhaps
To dry and store away for the sluggish winter.
Do you like to drink it from cloudy goblets? Or do you
Prefer to enjoy what it gives after long and careful Refining? Whatever your fancy, the wonderful powers
Which this herb has will supply all your needs.
—From Hortulus by Walahfrid Strabo. 1966
Translated from the Latin by Raef Payne