



CALENDULA (CALENDULA OFFICINALIS)

A Mediterranean annual herb belonging to the Asteraceae family. It should not be confused with marigolds which belong to the Tagetes genus. The large orange flowers are blooming from spring to first frost. Calendulas thrive in most soil types. There are several varieties, but only *C. officinalis* should be used medicinally.

Calendula flowers have many medicinal benefits when used externally. Their rich orange petals indicate that they are rich in 'carotene'. Calendula flowers are also rich in Vitamin A, Vitamin K, potassium, calcium and sulphur. The carotene and potassium are important oxygenating properties to help reduce swelling.

The medicinal values of Calendula lie in its petals. These are dried to make ointments, tinctures and washes. These are applied to burns, bruises and cuts and sunburn. Calendula is also astringent as

well as being an anti-oxidant, and an oxygenating tonic for the surface skin tissues. It helps to heal torn blood vessels under the skin, where it removes inflammatory conditions and heals torn blood vessels. It can be used to reduce the inflammation of the lining of the eyelid (conjunctivitis). Calendula is used to improve skin hydration and firmness. It has also been shown to help prevent dermatitis or skin inflammation in breast cancer patients during radiation therapy.

Calendula ointment helps in the restoration of nerve tissue and nerve function. It is a soothing ointment that does not sting and it heals without scarring. It can be used for nappy rash.

Calendula ointment can be most helpful if massaged around varicose veins, and haemorrhoids. Previously, Calendula was taken orally. Today that is not recommended, except as homeopathic drops, as it can be too strong for the liver.

There are some contra indications: avoid during pregnancy and during breastfeeding or when trying to conceive, or if allergic to the Asteraceae family.

I have found that using the petals remaining after making ointment is an excellent 'hand' moisturiser.

Notes prepared by Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame August 2014.