A PARTIAL LIST OF THE MEDICINAL PLANTS OF KANSAS

**Achillea millefolium**, Common yarrow - “The herb is an aromatic with diaphoretic and emmenagogue activity; it has been used as a vulnerary.” (Ref. 1, p. 30)

**Acorus calamus**, Drug sweetflag - “This plant has many uses ranging from a flavoring agent and insecticide to tonic.” The rhizomes are harvested in early spring or roots in September. (Ref. 1, p. 32)

**Adiantum pedatum**, American maidenhair fern - The leaves of this herb are used as an expectorant and tonic. “A tea of this herb is used to treat coughs, nasal congestion or catarrh, and hoarseness.” (Ref. 1, p. 36)

**Aesculus glabra**, Ohio buckeye - The bark is reported to have value as a tonic and febrifuge. In Europe, an alcohol extract of the nut was used to treat hemorrhoids and is considered a vasa-constrictor.

**Amaranthus hybridus**, Slim pigweed - Because of the astringent quality, the leaves and herb of this plant have been used in treating dysentery, ulcers, and hemorrhage of the bowel.

**Aplectrum hyemale**, Adam-and-Eve - The roots collected in the fall are reputed to have value in treating bronchial ailments. This plant is extremely rare in Kansas and should not be gathered.

**Apocynum cannabinum**, Hemp dogbane - “This plant is a diuretic and heart stimulant used in cases of cardiac dropsy and chronic Bright’s disease. The Indians also used the fibers for making thread, cord, fishing nets, and woven-ware.” (Ref. 1, p. 177)

**Arctium minus**, Common burdock - The United States dispensatory no longer lists this herb as medicinally valuable. In the past, “the crushed leaves were mixed with salt and applied to wounds caused by bites of vipers and mad dogs and other poisonous animals. The Japanese eat this root as a vegetable and, like artichoke tubers, would have nutritive value.” (Ref. 2, p. 425)

**Arisaema triphyllum**, Jack-in-the-pulpit - The raw corm is extremely irritating because of the needle-like calcium oxalate crystals. The plant has been used as an expectorant, irritant, and diaphoretic. The dried corms when ground into a meal were made into gruel by the Indians. (Ref. 1, p. 62 and Ref. 2, p. 47)

**Asarum canadense reflexum**, short-lobed wild ginger - The rhizome has value as an expectorant, antiseptic, and tonic. “Some of the modern German herbals recommend Asarum for intermittent fever, dropsy, sciatica, asthma, diseases of the liver or spleen, gout, indurated tumors, etc.” (Ref. 2, p. 316)
Asclepias syriaca, Common milkweed - “The Omahas and Ponca Indians boiled the roots and drank the decoction for bronchial and pulmonary sickness; and for healing wounds and old sores, they applies chewed fresh roots or dried powdered toots.” (Ref. 2, p. 182)

Asclepias tuberosa, Butterfly milkweed - “Pioneer physicians used the powdered root for disorders requiring sweating free expectoration, or a mild purgation; especially they found the preparations of the root efficient in the treatment of pleurisy - hence the name ‘pleurisy’.” (Ref. 2, p. 180)

Baptisia leucophaea, Plains wild indigo - “The Pawnee Indians used to powder these seeds and mix the powder with buffalo fat, for rubbing over the abdomen in cases of colic.” (Ref. 2, p. 273)

Berberis vulgaris, European barberry - “The fruit is rich in vitamin C and has been used in treating certain vitamin deficiencies. The root bark, which is astringent, has been used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, and jaundice. in Europe, a root infusion is used to treat chronic dyspepsia.” (Ref. 1, p. 74)

Ceanothus americanus, Jerseytea ceanothus - “The root is reportedly used as an astringent, stimulant, antispasmodic, expectorant, and sedative. In Europe it has been used to reduce high blood pressure and to treat enlarged spleen. The leaves are used for a tea.” (Ref. 1, p. 80) “The flowers also have medicinal properties, owing to their glucoside saponin content, which can be whipped to a foam in water, producing a cleansing wash for sores, and when taken internally in sufficient amounts acting as a purgative.” (Ref. 2, p. 326)

Chenopodium ambrosioides, Wormseed goosefoot - “The primary use is in the manufacturing of chenopodium oil, which is used to treat intestinal worms, both in humans and animals. The pollen is allergenic. In Mexico it is cooked and eaten as a vermifuge, and in Europe it is used as an infusion. In New Mexico, Spanish speaking people use a tea made of the leaves to encourage milk flow and to relieve post-delivery pains.” (Ref. 1, p. 86)

Cypripedium calceolus, Small yellow lady’s slipper - “The plant is used as a sedative and in treating neuralgia.” This is a rare species in Kansas and should not be disturbed from its native habitat.

Datura stramonium, Jimsonweed - “The dried leaves of this plant have been mixed with saltpeter and burned in a treatment for asthma. A poultice made from blossoms has been used to treat wounds and to kill pain; also, dried leaves are smoked in a pipe to relieve asthma. In the southwest, the plant is used by the Zuni Indians as a hallucinogenic. In Europe it has been used to treat pulmonary disease, nervous afflictions, and nymphomania.” (Ref. 1, p. 108)
**Dioscorea villosa**, Atlantic yam - “A fluid extract of the rhizome is expectorant, diaphoretic, antispasmodic, and an intestinal stimulant, effective in cases of bilious colic.” (Ref. 2, p. 54)

**Echinacea angustifolia**, Blacksamson echinacea - The Indians “applied the juice of this plant to burns to relieve the pain and assist healing. A piece of the root held against an aching tooth lessened the torture of it, and plants put into the steam bath eased the discomfort of the heat. In this day of scientific therapy and synthetic drugs, an alcoholic tincture of Echinacea root is used for the healing of wounds and cure of sore throat.”

**Eryngium yuccifolium**, Buttonsnakeroot erylgo - “This plant has been used with some success as a diaphoretic and expectorant. In large doses it proves emetic. The root, which is the part that is officinal, is pungent, bitter, and aromatic.” (Ref. 2, p. 345)

**Euonymus atropurpureus**, Eastern wahoo - “Following the practice of the Indians, the settlers used the bark of the root as a laxative and liver tonic; and it is still used in the drug trade for that purpose. The fruit and the leaves are purgative and children have suffered from eating the attractive capsules.” (Ref. 2, p. 333)

**Eupatorium perfoliatum**, Boneset - “This plant is used as a stimulant to promote digestion, strengthen the viscera, and restore body tone. It is also considered sudorific, alterative, antiseptic, cathartic, emetic, febrifuge, diuretic, and astringent. A tea made of the leaves is used to treat coughs and consumption, and it is used as a laxative.” (Ref. 1, p. 118) “An infusion of the dried herb - 1 ounce to a pint of boiling water - was a favorite treatment in cases of dengue or breakbone fever (hence the name boneset).” (Ref. 2, p. 415)

**Fragaria virginiana**, Wild strawberry - “The leaves of this plant are mildly astringent; the fruit has been used as an old time gout remedy and refrigerant.” (Ref. 1, p. 122)

**Fraxinus americana**, White ash - “The bark of this plant is tonic, cathartic, diuretic, a febrifuge, diaphoretic, astringent, anti-arthritic, and alterative. It has been prescribed for headache followed by fever, fever sores of the lips, and constipation. A tea made from the buds is sometimes used for snakebite.” (Ref. 1, p. 124)

**Galium aparine**, Catchweed bedstraw - “The U. S. Dispensatory lists the plant as an anti-scorbutic. The herb is also a diuretic, tonic, astringent, antispasmodic; and it is used to treat inflammation of the kidneys and bladder. The seeds are used as a coffee substitute in Sweden, and the dried plant is used as a tea in some countries.” (Ref. 1, p. 126)
Gentiana puberula, Downy gentian - "In the Middle Ages the clerical empiric, Sebastian Kneipp wrote: 'Whoever has a little garden should have in it (1) some sage, (2) some wormwood, (3) some gentian, then he has his dispensary right at hand'. Early uses of the plant was primarily for promoting the healing of wounds and ulcers, for convulsions and for the ailments of the stomach and liver." (Ref. 2, p. 173-174)

Geranium maculatum, Spotted geranium - "The leaves have been much used as a vulnerary. However, the roots and rhizomes which contain much tannin, are very astringent, antiseptic, styptic, and diuretic, and they have been used to treat diarrhea." (Ref. 1, p. 134)

Hedeoma pulegioides, American pennyroyal - "This herb is used as an antispasmodic, rubefacient, and stimulant." (Ref. 1, p. 138)

Juglans cinerea, Butternut - "The bark has been used as a rubifacient and cathartic. Oil extracted from the fruit is reportedly valuable in treating tapeworms and fungus infections." (Ref. 1, p. 148)

Juglans nigra, Black walnut - "The root bark is cathartic. A leaf infusion is used as an astringent and against bedbugs." (Ref. 1, p. 150)

Juniperus virginiana, Eastern redcedar - "The leaves have been used as a stimulant, emmenagogue, and taeniafuge. In some areas a mixture of nuts, leaves, and twigs is boiled and inhaled as a treatment for bronchitis." (Ref. 1, p. 154)

Lactuca scariola, Prickly lettuce - "The milky juice of this plant is extremely irritating to the eyes. The whole herb has been used as a diuretic, antispasmodic, and emollient." (Ref. 1, p. 156)

Leonurus cardiaca, Common motherwort - "The herb is used as a stimulant and emmenagogue. In Europe it has been used to treat heart palpitations and asthma." (Ref. 1, p. 158)

Liquidambar styraciflua, Sweetgum - "This tree is an important source of the drug storax, a stimulating expectorant, weak antiseptic, desharpener for tobacco and for treating scabies." (Ref. 1, p. 162)

Lobelia cardinalis, Cardinalflower - "Contains the alkaloids lobeline and lobelidine. As late as 1854, Goods Family Flora strongly recommended the free use of Lobelia for all nervous diseases, fits, convulsions, spasms, asthma, tetanus, St. Vitus’s dance, hydrophobia, etc." (Ref. 2, p. 362)
**Lycopus virginicus**, Virginia bugleweed - “Griffiths Medical Botany (1847) has this to say about Lycopus: ‘It acts like a mild narcotic and at the same time displays tonic powers. Those practitioners who have employed it are unanimous in declaring that it is an exceedingly valuable addition to the *Materia Medica*.’” (Ref. 2, p. 235)

**Marrubium vulgare**, Common hoarhound - “Although this species is no longer official in our pharmacopoeia, its curative value is vouched for in modern medical literature. W. Bohn’s ‘Die Keilwerthe heimischer Pflanzen’ (The Medicinal Value of Native Plants), Leipzig 1927 writes - The white Andorn (hoarhound) favorably affects the mucus membranes, resolves old stubborn catarrhs, alleviates asthmatic troubles and has found a place in the treatment of consumption. In larger doses it stimulates the vascular system, quickens excretion by the skin and kidneys, and acts as a laxative. It stimulates the activity of the liver in jaundice, rectifies a run-down condition and thereby promotes the curing of anemia.” (Ref. 2, p. 228)

**Menispermum canadense**, Common moonseed - The root of this plant has been used as a diuretic and a stomachic. Some claim it has value for blood disorders and arthritic conditions. The bluish-black fruit has a hard curved stone instead of several seeds like the wild grape and the fruit is poisonous.

**Mentha spicata**, Spearmint - “The herb is of value as a flavoring agent, carminative, antiemetic, refrigerant; and it is used to treat colic.” (Ref. I, p. 174)

**Monarda punctata occidentalis**, Western spotted bee balm - “The fine dots over both surfaces of the leaf are glands secreting a volatile oil - thymol, an aromatic, antiseptic phenol obtainable at pharmacies in crystalline form. This is a powerful antiseptic used to overcome intestinal infections and to eradicate hookworm; combined chemically with mercury or iodine, it is employed in preparation of surgical dressings in the form of ointments or dusting powders.” (Ref. 2, p. 226)

**Nasturtium officinale**, Watercress - Widely used as a fresh edible green. Leaves are rich in vitamins A and C. It has been used in Europe to increase urine flow and combat rheumatism and bronchitis. Pregnant women have been warned not to eat this plant because it may cause abortion.

**Nepeta cataria**, Catnip - The leafy flowering tops and whole herb when in full flower is used in cough remedies, for treating nervous ailments and hives. The stimulating action of this plant upon cats is well known.

**Passiflora incarnata**, Maypop passionflower - The herbs, leaves, roots, and flowering tops have been used as an antispasmodic sedative, and a treatment for neuralgia and epilepsy. The drug has been used to reduce blood pressure. It is reputed to be an aphrodisiac, particularly for elderly men.
Phytolacca americana, Common pokeweed - “The young shoots when properly prepared in spring are edible. Consumption of the plant is dangerous because it is a slow emetic and a purgative with some narcotic properties. The dried root is reported valuable in treating hemorrhoids.” (Ref. 1, p. 190)

Pinus strobus, Eastern white pine - “The bark is used as an astringent and expectorant; the wood has been used to produce white pine tar, which has value as an antiseptic, expectorant, and protective.” (Ref. 1, p. 194)

Plantago spp., Plantain - “The seeds are valuable as a bulk laxative. Soaking the seed in water causes it to exude a clear sticky gum, which has been used in manufacturing lotions and hair wave sets.” (Ref. 1, p. 196) Since ancient times, this species has been used medicinally. “A tea made of its leaves and seeds was reputed to be efficacious in cases of hemorrhoids, fever, cramps, stomach and liver troubles, headache, asthma, toothache, earache, whooping cough, diarrhea, wounds, and poisonous bites of serpents and insects.” (Ref. 2, p. 149)

Podophyllum peltatum, Common mayapple - The fruit, a many seeded berry, after it has ripened in July or August is edible. The roots and rhizomes, however, contain a poisonous resinous substance called podophyllin which is medicinal when used in properly regulated doses. The resin is extremely allergenic; it exhibits anti-tumor qualities.

Polygala alba, White polygala - The dried root of this plant is known in pharmacy as senega. It was used by the Indians and later the settlers as an antidote against the bite of poisonous snakes. It has also been used as an ingredient in cough syrup and for the treatment of respiratory diseases.

Polygonum hydropiper, Marshpepper smartweed - “The herb is a diuretic and it has been used in certain uterine disorders. In Europe it is used as a hemostatic drug to control internal and hemorrhoidal bleeding.” (Ref. 1, p. 204)

Populus deltoides, Eastern cottonwood - The buds of this tree gathered in late winter or early spring have been used as an agent to heal open wounds and for diseases of the chest and lungs.

Prunella vulgaris lanceolata, Common selfheal - This herb gathered at flowering time from June to November, is used as an aromatic and to relieve gas and colic. It is also used as a gargle and to treat diarrhea and hemorrhage. The Frenchman Jean de la Ruelle physician to Francis I said “No one who keeps Prunella needs a surgeon”.

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Prunus serotina, Black cherry – The drug hydrocyanic or prussic acid is obtained from the bark of the roots and branches. When medically used it is an excellent expectorant.

Quercus alba, White oak - This eastern Kansas tree, like others of its genus, has tannin in the bark which has been used as an astringent and antiseptic. A chartreuse dye can also be made from the bark.

Rhus glabra, Smooth sumac - “The dried ripe fruit of sumac is valuable as a source of tannic acid. Preparation of these fruits are effective as astringents, antidiuretics, and tonics. The stems produce a yellow dye.” (Ref. I, p. 214)

Rubus spp., Blackberry, dewberry, raspberry - “The roots and rhizomes of this plant have been used as astringents because of their high tannin content.” A wine or fruit juice made from the berries is used to control diarrhea. The bark of wild raspberry when made into a tea is used to control dysentery. (Ref. 1, p. 216) “The chemical contents of the fruit are: malic, oxalic, citric, succinic, and salicylic acids, enzyme-peroxidase, gum, coloring matter, pectins, pentosans, dextrose, levulose, saccharose, and fat.” (Ref. 2, p. 250)

Rumex crispus, Curled dock - “The roots of this plant are reportedly valuable as an astringent and mild laxative. --- The Indians used the root for a yellow dye.” (Ref. 1, p. 218)

Salix nigra, Black willow - The bark gathered during flowering time is reportedly an expectorant, hemostatic, astringent, and tonic. The buds, like those of the cottonwood, have been used to treat open wounds and for ailments of the chest and lungs.

Salvia officinalis, Garden sage - “Sage reportedly has many therapeutic uses. The drug is an astringent and used to relieve gas and colic. European research suggests estrogen is present but has not been isolated. It has been used to help achieve regularity of menstrual periods. Its major use, however, is for culinary purposes.” (Ref. 1, p. 224)

Sanguinaria canadensis, Bloodroot - This member of the poppy family has a rootstock which when bruised or broken exudes a red “latex”. The Indians used this to paint themselves as well as their wares and clothing. The alkaloid drug contained in the tuber is sanguinarine and must be used with great caution. Medically its uses include: pain relief, sedative, emetic, laxative, and expectorant.

Sassafras albidum, Sassafras - The shrub or tree of extreme southeast Kansas is more commonly known for its sassafras oil which is distilled from the root and used as a flavoring agent in beverages, confectionery, toothpaste, and the like. The tea may serve medically as a diaphoretic, diuretic, stimulant, and to relieve gas and colic.
Scrophularia marilandica, Maryland figwort - “The herb is used as a tonic, diuretic, diaphoretic, and in reducing hemorrhoids.” (Ref. 1, p. 230)

Scutellaria lateriflora, Sideflowering skullcap - The herb collected in early summer is reputed to be a nervine, tonic, diuretic, and antispasmodic.

Senecio aureus, Golden groundsel - The root, herb when flowering, or the entire plant before flowering is used as an expectorant and pectoral. It has also been used as an agent to induce menstrual flow and to promote the healing of wounds.

Solanum carolinense, Carolina horsenettle - This plant has been reported as extremely poisonous. “The berries when properly prepared have been used as diuretics, antispasmodics, and to relieve and quiet pain. According to the U. S. Dispensatory, the berries have also been used for the treatment of epilepsy.” (Ref. 1, p. 236)

Stellaria media, Chickweed - This common Kansas weed is an edible plant resembling spinach in flavor. Medically it is classed as an expectorant, allays thirst, gives a sensation of coolness to the body and soothes the mucous membrane.

Stillingia sylvatica, Stillingia - The rootstock harvested in the late summer has been used as a diuretic, cathartic, and agent to induce vomiting.

Tanacetum vulgare, Common tansy - “The herbals of middle and western Europe have told of the medicinal virtues of tansy, recommending a tea made by infusing its dried leaves, flowers, and seeds for a vermifuge and emmenagogue, and for treatment of gout, minor chorea, St. Vitus’s dance, fever, and ague, and for external application to wounds; and they advise that areas afflicted by rheumatism and gout be rubbed with the oil.” (Ref. 2, p. 420-421)

Tephrosia virginiana, Virginia tephrosia - The root of this plant gathered in the fall, dried and powdered, is used as an insecticide and piscicide. The Indians noted that the plant juices killed fish also. The U. S. Dispensatory lists the plant as used as a vermifuge.

Trifolium pratense, Red clover - “The flowers of this plant are therapeutically used as an antispasmodic, expectorant, sedative, and vulnerary. The U. S. Dispensatory reports that the flowers have been used in some anti-asthma cigarettes. In central Europe, clover has been used to regulate digestive functions, to improve the appetite, and to treat liver ailments.” (Ref. 1, p. 252)

Ulmus rubra, Slippery elm - “Upon soaking in warm water, the inner bark of this tree produces a mucilage that can be used as a protective, demulcent, emollient, laxative and vulnerary.” (Ref. 1, p. 260)
Verbascum thapsus, Flannel mullein - “The leaves and flowers are classed as astringent, antitussive, respiratory sedative, antifungal, and anodyne.” Some ethnic groups have smoked the dried leaves, wrapped in corn husks, as a treatment for asthma. (Ref. 1, p. 264)

Verbena hastata, Blue verbena - “The herb and root of this plant have reportedly been used as an astringent, antipyretic, vulnerary, antirheumatic, tonic, and expectorant.” (Ref. 1, p. 266)

Veronicastrum virginicum, Culversphysic - The common name of this plant refers to “the infusion of the rhizome containing an active crystalline glucoside which was much used by Dr. Culver and other physicians of the last century as a mild cathartic”. (Ref. 2, p. 201)

Viburnum prunifolium, Blackhaw viburnum - “The bark is used as an infusion for uterine sedative, diuretic, antispasmodic, and tonic.” (Ref. 1, p. 270)

Xanthoxylum americanum, Common pricklyash - “Preparations made from the bark of this tree are reportedly used as a sudorific or diaphoretic, tonic, and antispasmodic. The fruit has some flavoring qualities also.” (Ref. 1, p. 276)

The references herein referred to are:
