

Barberry

Botanical Name: *Berberis vulgaris*

Family: Berberidaceae

Energetics: Cooling, drying

Taste: Bitter, sour

Actions: Antimicrobial, bitter tonic, cholagogue, hepatoprotective, anti-inflammatory

Overview

Barberry is a powerful bitter herb traditionally used to support liver and gallbladder function, digestive health, and microbial balance. Rich in berberine, it has a long history of use in Western herbalism, Ayurveda, and Traditional Chinese Medicine for infections and digestive stagnation.

Uses

Internal Uses

- Supports liver and gallbladder function
- Stimulates bile flow and digestion
- Antimicrobial for bacterial, fungal, and parasitic infections
- Supports gut health and microbial balance
- Traditionally used for diarrhea and dysentery

External Uses

- Washes or compresses for skin infections
- Mouth rinse for oral infections (well diluted)
- Topical preparations for wounds and inflammation

Medication Interactions

- May interact with antibiotics or antimicrobial medications
- Can affect medications metabolized by the liver (CYP450)
- Use caution with blood sugar-lowering medications

Contraindications

- Pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Severe liver disease without supervision

- Infants and young children

Caution & Safety

- Not intended for long-term daily use
- Use in short courses unless guided by a practitioner
- Bitter taste may cause nausea in sensitive individuals

Herbal Pairings

Blends Well With

- Dandelion Root (liver and bile support)
- Burdock Root (detox and skin support)
- Oregon Grape Root (antimicrobial synergy)
- Ginger (digestive comfort)
- Milk Thistle (liver protection)

Avoid Combining With

- Other strong berberine-containing herbs long-term
- Potent laxative herbs

Possible Side Effects

- Nausea or stomach upset
- Cramping with excessive doses
- Temporary digestive discomfort

Forms & Dosage

Decoction

- ½–1 tsp dried root or bark per cup water
- Simmer 15–20 minutes
- 1–2 cups daily for short-term use

Tincture (1:5)

- 1–2 mL, 2–3 times daily

Capsules / Powder

- 400–500 mg standardized extract, 1–2 times daily

Notes

Barberry is a potent bitter and antimicrobial herb best used for specific indications rather than daily tonic use. Its strength makes it highly effective when used with intention and respect.

For educational purposes only; not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any condition.