

## Herbal Action Categories

Christopher Hobbs, Ph.D., L.Ac.

Version 3.0, 2016

### Abortifacient:

An herb that induces or causes premature expulsion of a fetus. Indications:

Unwanted pregnancy.

Herbs: Tansy; pennyroyal oil (caution: toxic)

### Acrid:

A heating, irritating herb that causes a feeling of warmth in the mouth or on the skin or mucous membranes. Acrid

Herbs often have antibacterial and blood-dispersing effects; removes coldness.

Indications: stagnant ulcers, feeling of internal coldness, digestive problems, retention of mucus in the upper respiratory tract.

Herbs: Bloodroot, Ginger, Prickly ash.

### Adaptogen:

An herb that helps the body adapt to stress, increase endurance, speed recovery from illness and work, and strengthen immune function. According to I.I. Brekhmann, the Russian doctor who studied and popularized the concept of adaptogens, they must fulfill 3 criteria: 1. Do no harm, place no stress on the body. 2. Help the body adapt to a wide range of environmental and internal stressors (noise, pollution, emotions). 3. An adaptogen has an amphoteric (normalizing) effect on the activity of several body systems--especially the nervous system, hormonal system, and immune system. For instance, if the blood sugar is too low, it will bring it up; if too high, it will have a tendency to lower it. Herbs: eleuthero, rhodiola, ashwaganda, schisandra.

### Adjuvant:

An herb that is added to a formula or mixture of herbs in order to enhance or change its overall activity. Indications:

Reduce side effects of herbs or formulas, enhance activity or taste.

Herbs: Licorice, Ginger, orange peel.

### Adrenal Tonic:

An herb that supports adrenal function, for instance to counteract fatigue. These Herbs are especially indicated for people who have been under stress for an extended period, or who overwork themselves. Weakened adrenal function is often associated with "chronic fatigue syndrome," which may be a general deficient state of the hormonal, nervous, and immune systems possibly including a non-specific viral infection. The syndrome may begin with "chronic adrenal fatigue," and thus adrenal tonics are always indicated. They are also useful for people with blood sugar swings or imbalances, bouts of depression, and allergies. Herbs: rehmannia, American ginseng.

### Alterative:

Herbs or foods that slowly alter the activity of a tissue, organ system, or an organism by enhancing nutrition, energy, or vitality, without overtly stimulating; an older term for an adaptogen or tonic. Indications: Deficiency states, chronic fatigue syndrome, immune weakness, loss of muscle or organ tone, weak digestion.

Herbs: Echinacea, eleuthero, yellow dock, sarsaparilla, dandelion whole plant, red clover, burdock roots and seeds.

### Analgesic:

An herb or procedure (such as hydrotherapy) that relieves or reduces feelings of pain. Indications: pain.

Herbs: Jamaican dogwood, corydalis, passion flower.

### Anaphrodisiac:

Removes sexual interest, reduces libido. Indications: Excessive sexual fantasies, desire.

Herbs: Skullcap, Hops.

Anesthetic, mild:

Deadens sensation. Indications: Pain.  
Herbs: Echinacea, Prickly ash, Clove oil;  
hydrotherapy (cold).

Anodyne:

An herb that relieves pain; analgesic.  
Herbs: Jamaican dogwood, corydalis.

Anthelmintic:

Destroys or removes intestinal worms.  
Indications: Worms.  
Herbs: Wormseed, Garlic, Tansy, Rue.

Antiallergic:

Herbs that counteract allergies. Generally,  
the herbs have an anti-inflammatory and  
antihistamine effect in the body.  
Herbs: goldenseal, Oregon grape root,  
eyebright, nettle, aloe, rhubarb (emodin-  
containing herbs).

Anticoagulant:

An herb that mildly inhibits blood  
coagulation through platelet activity.  
Herbs: Ginkgo, garlic

Antiinflammatory:

Herbs that lower inflammation, either by  
inhibiting prostaglandin (local-acting  
hormones) synthesis or blocking the  
production of inflammatory substances  
(such as histamine) by the immune system,  
or by other means.  
Herbs: Oregon grape root, yarrow,  
chamomile, St. John's wort, turmeric,  
ginger, pineapple stem, hops.

Antibacterial:

An herb that destroys bacteria or retards its  
growth, such as golden seal.  
Herbs: garlic, andrographis, bloodroot,  
thyme, tea tree, berberine-containing  
herbs.

Anticholesteremic:

Herbs that have a tendency to lower blood  
cholesterol with continued use. Indications:  
High cholesterol levels (over 180 or so).  
Herbs: Shepherd's purse, Garlic, Artichoke  
leaf, Psyllium, oyster mushrooms, shiitake.

Antidepressant:

An herb that helps relieve mild depression,  
such as St. John's wort.  
Herbs: St. John's wort, rosemary, green tea.

Antidiarrhetic:

An herb that slows or stops diarrhea, such  
as blackberry root.

Herbs: blackberry root, white oak bark,  
bilberry leaves, potentilla root.

Antiemetic: Counteracts or relieves nausea  
and vomiting.

Indications: Nausea and vomiting  
associated with car-, sea-sickness, morning  
sickness, or other causes.

Herbs: Ginger, Lavender.

Antifungal:

An herb that kills pathogenic fungus or  
retards their growth, such as black walnut.  
Herbs: black walnut, garlic, Oregon grape  
root, barberry, coptis.

Anhydrotic, internal:

Anhydratics are Herbs that dry tissues,  
removing excess water. In Traditional  
Chinese Medicine, dampness is considered  
a disease-causing factor (pathogen).  
Anhydratics then are herbs that counteract  
dampness or "drain" dampness. They work  
in two major ways: 1. Astringent herbs  
"tighten" or condense tissues to squeeze  
out excess moisture. Tannins in herbs can  
do this. 2. By increasing the elimination of  
water from the body through the kidneys  
and bowels--diuretics and aquaretics can do  
this.

Herbs: White oak bark, witch hazel bark,  
uva-ursi, dandelion leaf, green tea, fuling,  
zhuling.

**Antihydrotic, external:**

Also called anhydrotic, this is an herb that slows the production of sweat, such as sage leaf. These are used in natural antiperspirants.

Herbs: sage leaf

**Antilithic:**

Dissolves and removes urinary gravel or stones (calculi). Helps prevent their formation. Indications: Tendency to form gravel or stones in the urinary tract. Often beneficial for heavy meat-eaters.

Herbs: Stone root, Gravel root, hydrangea root.

**Antimicrobial:**

An herb that kills microbes of any type, such as bacteria.

Herbs: garlic, any berberine-containing herb, oregano, thyme oil (caution internally).

**Antinauseant:**

An herb that quiets nausea, such as ginger.

Herbs: ginger, lavender.

**Antioxidant:**

Antioxidants are compounds such as phenolic compounds found in fruits that bind with "free-radicals" and deactivate them. Free-radicals are highly reactive molecules containing oxygen that can bind with the cell-walls and genetic material in the body's healthy cells, disrupting their function or even destroying them. Free-radical damage in the body is associated with an increased risk of cancer and is the main mechanism by which our vital organs are damaged when they do not receive sufficient blood, or when there is an infection. For instance, in a heart attack, the heart muscle is deprived of blood for a period of time, and extensive damage to the heart muscle can occur--much of this damage involves the action of free-radicals, according to some scientists.

Herbs: Rosemary, lemon balm, elderberry fruit.

**Antiperiodic**

Usually refers to an herb or substance that helps relieve cyclic fevers, as in malaria.

Herbs: Quinine, Artemisia annua (sweet annie).

**Antiphlogistic:**

See Antiinflammatory.

**Antiplatelet:**

Inhibits platelet activity, supposedly reducing blood viscosity and coagulability.

Herbs: garlic, ginger, feverfew, motherwort, yarrow.

**Antipyretic:**

Reduces fever by turning down the temperature control in the hypothalamus.

Indications: Fever.

Herbs: Willow bark, meadowsweet (salicylate-containing herbs).

**Antirheumatic:**

An herb that lowers inflammation and helps relieve the pain and swelling associated with rheumatism.

Herbs: feverfew, willow bark, devil's claw, figwort.

**Antiscorbutic:**

Relieves and prevents scurvy by supplying vitamin C. Indications: Vitamin C deficiency due to inadequate dietary intake.

Herbs: Rose Hips, Citrus fruits.

**Antiseptic:**

Inhibits the growth of harmful organisms (bacteria, etc.), kills on contact. Indications: Exposure to bacteria, cuts, wounds, abrasions; useful in mouth rinses.

Herbs: Bloodroot, Usnea, Tea tree oil.

**Antispasmodic:**

Relieves or reduces spasms, especially in smooth muscle (uterus, intestine, blood

vessels, bronchi). Indications: Uterine cramping during PMS, colitis, irritable bowel syndromes, high blood pressure, stranguary.

Herbs: Wild yam, Chamomile, yarrow, California poppy.

#### Antitoxin:

The herb has the ability to help the body remove as well as neutralize toxins from the blood, organs, and tissues.

Herbs: Coptis, honeysuckle, elder flower, yarrow, forsythia.

#### Antitraumatic:

An herb that helps the body deal with trauma and speed up the healing process. For example, arnica has anti-inflammatory effects, and it can help prevent the formation of blood stagnation and pain after a sprain, strain, or blow.

Herbs: arnica, sweet clover, yarrow, plantain, calendula.

#### Antitumor:

This remedy inhibits tumor growth, or prevents its formation. Some

Herbs stimulate immune function to specifically increase its ability to target tumor cells and destroy them.

Herbs: shiitake, maitake, turkey tails, burdock root, garlic, Brassica cultivars (kale, etc.).

#### Antitussive:

Relieves or reduces the urge to cough.

Indications: Coughing, throat irritation.

Herbs: Coltsfoot, Mullein, Licorice, Loquat leaf.

#### Antiviral:

An herb that kills viruses or slows the progression of viral infection in the body, such as the watery fraction of lemon balm.

Herbs. Can be direct-acting against the virus like andrographis, St. John's wort, lemon balm, garlic, or by inducing the antiviral activity of the immune respons (shiitake).

#### Aperient:

A gentle stimulant (stimulating tonic) to the digestion; a mild laxative. Indications: Constipation, weak, painful digestion, stress affecting digestion and elimination.

Herbs: Artichoke leaf, Yellow dock, Dandelion, wormwood tea, immature citrus fruit slices.

#### Aphrodisiac:

A sexual stimulant. Indications: lowered sexual desire.

Herbs: Damiana, Muira puama, yohimbe; perhaps kava and of course cannabis.

#### Appetizer:

Stimulates the appetite. Indications: Weak, painful digestion, lowered interest in food.

Herbs: Artichoke leaf, Gentian root, Bitter tonics.

#### Aquaretic:

A gentle herbal diuretic, such as dandelion leaf, that increases the body's output of urine, helping to relieve edema.

Herbs: uva-ursi, dandelion leaf, green tea, asparagus root, juniper.

#### Aromatic:

Herbs or remedies that are grateful to the digestion (well-tolerated); mildly stimulating; usually essential oil-containing. Herbs that warm the mucous membranes and cool the interior of the body.

Indications: Asthma, Fevers, Colds, Flu, Mucous Membrane Infections (especially Chronic).

Herbs: Peppermint, Fennel, Cumin, Dill seed.

#### Astringent:

Polyphenolic (tannin)-containing

Herbs that contract tissues, removing moisture (drying), cross-linking proteins.

Astringent herbs can be anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-diarrheal, etc.

Indications: Burns, urinary tract infections, diarrhea.

Herbs: Green tea, Oak bark, Willow bark, Persimmons, Rhatany, Bilberry.

#### Azoturic:

An azoturic is a remedy that increases the elimination of nitrogenous waste products from the body through the urine or feces.

Herbs: Sarsaparilla.

#### Balsam:

A resinous, aromatic, sticky plant exudate containing phenolic acids (benzoic acid derivatives), having stimulating, warming and anti-microbial properties. Indications: Coldness, blood stagnancy, infections, scabies, respiratory ailments (asthma, bronchitis, coughs, etc.).

Herbs: Balsam of Peru, Balsam Of Tolu, Styrax.

#### Bitter:

Herbs or foods that taste bitter and activate the appetite and digestion. Indications:

Weakness of the digestion, chronic illness, nervous system weakness, stress, lowered hydrochloric acid output in stomach, poor protein digestion, etc.

Herbs: Gentian, Artichoke, Barberry, Golden seal, Oregon grape.

#### Blood Builder:

An herb that helps enrich the blood, stimulating the production of new blood cells.

Herbs: dong quai, rehmannia, nettle, he shou wu; digestive tonics.

#### Blood Purifier:

A blood purifier is an herb that stimulates the immune system, liver, and bowels to increase the removal of waste products from the blood. In the immune system, there are large phagocytic (cell-eating) immune cells called macrophages that engulf waste products, diseased cells, and cellular debris and break them down and recycle them. The blood purifier echinacea is known to stimulate the activity of these

immune cells. Other herbs like burdock might work by increasing bile output from the liver. It is known that toxins and other undesirable chemicals are carried in the bile, and when the output is increased, more will be eliminated through the bowels. Some blood purifiers work by increasing the release of toxins through the sweat (when used as a warm tea); and the urinary release of toxins when used as a cool tea (elder flowers, blue vervain); and aquaretics, which also increase output of waste products (sarsaparilla, parsley root). Herbs: red clover, burdock root, yellow dock root.

#### Blood-mover:

An herb that stimulates the movement of blood in various parts of the body. In traditional medicine, pain is often associated with "stagnant blood," or blood stasis. When the blood vessels are dilated and directed through an area of stagnation, the pain should be relieved.

Herbs: dong quai, prickly ash bark, turmeric.

#### Bronchodilator:

An herb that dilates the bronchi, the large air passages leading into the lungs, allowing freer movement of air in and out.

Herbs: ephedra (ma huang), green tea, lobelia, cannabis.

#### Calmative:

A mild sedative or relaxing herb.

Indications: Mild restlessness, nervousness, upset stomach, mild anxiety.

Herbs: Catnip, Linden. Lemon Balm, Chamomile, California poppy, valerian.

#### Cardiac:

Beneficial to the heart, or sometimes helps relieve a feeling of fullness or discomfort in cardiac region or near the pyloric valve.

Indications: Feeling of fullness or oppression over the heart or pyloric valve, heart weakness.

Herbs: Hawthorn, Motherwort, Hops, Cactus.

**Carminative:**

Herbs or essential oils that help the bowels release gas. They work by relaxing spasms of the intestine and increasing peristalsis to push gas out. Some carminatives, like peppermint oil, may also desensitize pain sensors, helping to relieve gas pains.

Indications: Flatulence, gas pains.

Herbs: The Four Greater Carminative Seeds--Anise, Caraway, Cumin, And Fennel; Four Lesser Seeds--Bishop's Weed, Stone Parsley, Celery Seed, And Wild Carrot; also The Mints, especially Peppermint.

**Cathartic:**

Divided into purgatives and laxatives--an herb that helps facilitate the emptying of the bowels. More forceful than a laxative, but less so than a purgative. Stimulates peristalsis, decreases uptake of water from the fecal mass, which makes feces softer.

Indications: Constipation.

Herbs: Aloe, Rhubarb, Senna, Cascara, etc.

**Caustic:**

Corrosive--destructive to living tissue. Used to stimulate new granulation in a stagnant ulcer. Indications: Ulcers that won't heal, warts--USE WITH CAUTION!

Herbs: spurge latex, Buttercup, Bloodroot.

**Cholagogue:**

An herb that increases the flow of bile into the duodenum. Indications: Weak digestion, poor fat digestion, gallbladder problems, constipation.

Herbs: Artichoke leaf, Dandelion, Chicory, Gentian, Centaury, Turmeric, Fringetree, Boldo.

**Counterirritant:**

An irritation produced in one part of the body, such as the dermatones on the skin, to relieve congestion in another part (such as the liver). Indications: Sore muscles,

aches, pains, congestion in internal organs, for instance lung congestion (mustard plaster).

Herbs: Cayenne, Mustard seed plaster, Ginger fomentation, Camphor oil, etc.

**Decongestant:**

An herb that reduces congestion, especially in the nasal passages.

Herbs: eyebright, ma huang (ephedra), Chinese magnolia buds, cocklebur fruit (cang er zi).

**Demulcent:**

Mucilaginous

Herbs which soothe irritated or inflamed tissue or mucous membranes. Indications: Ulcers, sore throat, tonsillitis, bladder infections, inflammation or heat in the upper respiratory tract, bowels.

Herbs: Marshmallow root, slippery elm, flaxseed, plantain, irish moss, comfrey.

**Deodorant:**

An herb which destroys or lessens body odors. Indications: Strong-smelling sweat or body odor.

Herbs: Sage.

**Depurative:**

A purifying or cleansing agent. Indications: Acne, boils, styes.

Herbs: Red clover, Burdock, Wild indigo, Sarsaparilla.

**Diaphoretic:**

An herb that promotes perspiration and facilitates the elimination of toxins via the skin. Indications: Fever, flu, colds, general toxemia.

Herbs: Yarrow, Elder, Peppermint, Boneset, Ginger, Cayenne.

**Digestant:**

An herb that promotes good digestion.

Indications: Weak digestion, painful digestion, bloating, lack of appetite.

Herbs: Artichoke Leaf, Gentian, Ginger, Orange Peel, Fennel, Cardamon, Dandelion Root, Milk Thistle Seed, Anise, Cayenne, Centaury, wormwood tea.

**Diuretic:**

An herb that increases urinary output. In Europe, mildly diuretic Herbs are called "aquaretics." The word diuretic is reserved for drugs that have a stronger effect on the output of urine. Indications: Edema, cystitis with difficult urination, high blood pressure.

Herbs: Cleavers, dandelion leaf, Uva Ursi, Parsley Root, Buchu, Goldenrod, Corn Silk, Shavegrass.

**Emetic:**

An herb or other agent that causes nausea and vomiting. Indications: Asthma, ingestion of toxic substances.

Herbs: Lobelia, Poke Root, Ipecacuana (Ipecac).

**Emmenagogue:**

An herb that stimulates the onset and regulates the flow rate of menstruation. Indications: Late periods (not from pregnancy).

Herbs: Black cohosh, pennyroyal tea, ginger, rosemary, yarrow.

**Emollient:**

An herb, usually containing mucilage or gum, applied externally to soothe and soften the skin. Indications: Chapped skin, irritated skin, rashes, sunburn.

Herbs: Comfrey, Chickweed, Flaxseed, Malva (mallow leaf), flaxseed, sweet almond oil, fig, holyhock root, fenugreek.

**Errhine:**

An herb that stimulates nasal discharge. Herbs: iceland moss powder, cayenne, horseradish.

**Expectorant:**

Lowers the viscosity and promotes the expulsion of mucus from the respiratory tract. Indications: Bronchial and lung congestion, coughs, asthma.

Herbs: Grindelia, Lobelia (small amounts), bloodroot (small amounts), licorice, elecampane, anise, poplar buds, coltsfoot, yerba santa, foenugreek, garlic, heartsease, horehound.

**Febrifuge:**

A cooling herb which lowers fever.

Indications: Fever.

Herbs: Elder, Honeysuckle Flowers, Peppermint, Boneset, Catnip, Chamomile.

**Galactagogue:**

An herb which increase the flow of breast milk. Indications: Insufficient quantity of breast milk.

Herbs: Fennel, Vitex, Blessed Thistle, Hops.

**Hemostatic:**

Stops internal or external bleeding (hemorrhage). Indications: Bleeding.

Herbs: Shepherd's Purse, Yarrow, Agrimony, Cayenne, Golden Seal.

**Hepatic:**

An herb that tonifies and strengthens the liver, while regulating its action. Indications: Poor digestion, hepatitis, headaches, PMS.

Herbs: Milk Thistle, Centaury, Dandelion, Artichoke Leaf, dodder, iris root, fringetree bark, boldo leaf, toadflax.

**Hormonal Regulator:**

An herb that has a tendency to normalize hormone output from the glands, such as vitex, which balances progesterone output from the ovaries.

Herbs: Vitex, black cohosh.

**Hypnotic:**

Herbs promote sleep.

Indications: Insomnia, sleeping disorders.

Herbs: Valerian, California Poppy, Hops, Wild Lettuce, kava.

#### Hypotensive:

An herb that lowers blood pressure, especially when it is too high. Most herbal hypotensives are very mild-acting and require several months of use before they have a marked effect.

Herbs: Garlic, hawthorn, mistletoe, shepherd's purse, eucommia bark.

#### Hypothyroidal:

An herb that reduces the thyroxin output of the thyroid gland, useful for people with overactive (hyperthyroidism) thyroid function. Herbs: Bugleweed, blue vervain, lemon balm.

#### Immune stimulant:

An herb that has a tendency to activate various immune functions, such as macrophage activity. Echinacea is the best-known immune-stimulating herb. These Herbs are often recommended for short cycles (up to 10 days on 3 days off) for people who are not immuno-compromised, to direct the body's vital energy to fight infections such as colds or flu. Immune stimulants are often contraindicated for use with people who have severely compromised immunity. This is because they might overstimulate an immune system that has no reserves, actually leading to immune suppression.

Herbs: Echinacea, wild ginger (caution), thuja, osha, arnica (caution), boneset, mistletoe, castor oil, poke root, medicinal mushrooms.

#### Irritant:

An irritating herb such as cayenne. These Herbs are often called "counterirritants" because they stimulate nerve endings on areas of the skin that in turn send a signal to internal tissues or organs that are connected to the same nerve pathway. This process can help send more blood and

energy to the area to remove congestion and stimulate healing. Internal counterirritants are sometimes used similarly, especially to dilate the air passages and remove mucus (expectoration). Lobelia is a classic example of an herb that is very irritating to the mucous membranes when it is taken orally, which ultimately leads to relaxation of the bronchi and other internal organs after its irritation has ceased to act. Thus lobelia is a well-known herb for relieving asthma attacks.

#### Laxative:

Herbs promote bowel evacuation by hydrating and softening the fecal mass as it travels through the colon and by simulating peristalsis. Two types are recognized, stimulant laxatives containing anthraquinone glycosides (like senna and cascara) and bulk laxatives like flax and psyllium. Additionally, triphala is a non-stimulant, non bulk-forming mild laxative and bowel-tonic that consists of 3 fruits. Used in Ayurvedic herbal medicine from India. Indications: Constipation. Herbs: Psyllium, Flax, Senna, Cascara Sagrada, Yellow Dock, Rhubarb Root.

#### Lymphatic:

An herb that stimulates the flow of lymph in the lymph vessels. The lymphatic system is largely involved with purifying the blood system, helping to remove wastes from the tissues. The lymphatic fluid is rich in immune cells, such as phagocytes, cell eaters that remove wastes, old body cells, and toxins from body tissues and systems. Examples of lymphatic herbs include echinacea, poke root, red clover, and red root.

#### Metabolic:

Metabolism is all the chemical and physical processes which function to support our living body, especially ones involved with the production and direction of vital energy.

Metabolic is the adjective that refers to metabolism, "metabolic processes." The word is sometimes taken to mean an herb that regulates or stimulates the metabolic processes. Ginseng is thought to be a metabolic stimulant.

Herbs: Ginseng, caffeine-containing herbs (coffee, tea, kola nut, chocolate, guarana).

Moistening herbs:

Herbs that moisturize tissues or organs. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, dryness is considered a disease-causing factor (pathogen). Moisturizing herbs can be salty (kombu, kelp), which increases the ability of the tissues to hold water, or they can contain mucilages or gums (psyllium, flax, acacia gum), which by their molecular nature have the ability to hold water.

Herbs: kombu, kelp, flax, psyllium.

Mucolytic:

An herb that dissolves mucus, or an herb that thins mucus so the body can move it out of the body. For instance, herbs can have resins that speed up the secretion of fluids from the mucous membranes, or saponins, which are soap-like compounds that thin mucus. When the mucus is thinner, the cilia, or tiny hairs in the bronchial area, can "beat" or move the mucus up to the throat, so it can be gotten rid of. According to traditional Chinese medicine, mucolytics (dissolve phlegm) are useful for a program to help alleviate such conditions as seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff or cradle-cap), or for helping to dissolve non-malignant swellings and cysts. Herbs: polygala, lemon, elecampane, pine bark, yerba santa

Narcotic:

A pain-relieving herb which can cause sleep in large doses. Indications: Pain, insomnia due to pain.

Herbs: Corydalis, Jamaican Dogwood, Yellow Jasmine (Gelsemium--used only by

practitioners, not available in stores), opium poppy (restricted by law).

Nauseant:

An herb that induces nausea.

Herbs: lobelia, poke root, wild ginger leaf.

Nephritic:

An herb used to support the health of the kidneys. Indications: Weak kidneys, chronic, low-grade infections, kidney stones.

Herbs: Parsley root, marshmallow root, dandelion root, pipsissewa, goldenrod, privet berries (*Ligustrum lucidum*), Chinese dogwood fruit (*cornus*).

Nervine:

An herb which affects the nervous system; there are different classes--a relaxing nervine (valerian), stimulating nervine (cacao or kola nut), tonic nervine (wild oats). A neurotrophic herb is one that is nourishing and tonifying to the nerves, and has an influence or affinity for the nerves or nervous system. Indications: Nervousness, anxiety.

Herbs: Lion's mane mushroom, Valerian, Skullcap, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Linden, Passion Flower, Wild Oats.

Oxytocic:

Stimulates uterine contractions, facilitating childbirth. Indications: Prolonged or delayed labor. Herbs: Beth root, black cohosh, partridge berry, corn smut (*Ustilago*).

Pectoral:

Affects diseases of the respiratory tract. Indications: Coughs, bronchitis, pneumonia. Herbs: Elecampane, Licorice, Red Clover, Marshmallow, Horehound, Hyssop, Sundew, Mullein.

Platelet-inhibitor:

See Antiplatelet.

**Purgative:**

Causes strong bowel evacuation.

Indications: Extreme constipation, removal of toxic factors (such as bacteria or chemicals) from the body, some traditional cleansing rituals.

Herbs: Aloe, Buckthorn, Castor Oil, Mandrake (caution).

**Refrigerant:**

An herb that relieves fever, internal heat, and thirst. Indications: Sunstroke, invasion of the body by summer heat, high fever.

Herbs: Barberry, Gentian, Golden seal, Elder flower and fruit, Honeysuckle Flowers and stems, Forsythia Fruit.

**Restorative:**

An herb or food that restores balance and strength to the body and its systems; a tonic, sometimes called a "roborant." Called "life medicine" in native American Indian medicine (such as mountain mahogany).

Herbs: Ginseng, dong quai, gentian

**Rubefacient:**

A local irritant that increases circulation in the skin, relieving pain in the muscles and promoting healing. Indications: Sports injuries, aches and pains of the muscles from inactivity or overactivity.

Herbs: Ginger compress, Horseradish, Cayenne liniment, Camphor balms.

**Sedative:**

A soothing and calming herb that relieves nervousness and stress. Indications: Nervousness, anxiety.

Herbs: Valerian, Skullcap, Passion Flower, Jamaican Dogwood, California Poppy, Lemon Balm, kava.

**Sialagogue:**

An herb that stimulates the secretion of saliva. Indications: Dry mouth.

Herbs: Prickly ash, echinacea, cayenne.

**Stimulant:**

An herb which accelerates the physiological processes of the nervous system, hormonal system, digestion, etc.. Indications: fatigue, stagnancy of the digestion, other organ systems.

Herbs: Cayenne, Horseradish, Mustard, Ginger, Garlic, Kola, Guarana, Yerba Mate.

**Stomachic:**

An herb or process that tonifies, strengthens, or normalizes the activity of the stomach. Indications: Nausea, nervous stomach, belching, stomach pains.

Herbs: Lavender, Lemon Balm, Ginger, Wild Yam, Gentian, Cardamon, Hops.

**Styptic:**

An astringent herb which stops bleeding by contracting the blood vessels. Indications: Cuts, wounds with excessive bleeding.

Herbs: Yarrow, Golden seal, Cayenne.

**Thyrogenic:**

An action originating from the thyroid gland. Herbs that affect the nutrition or activity of the thyroid gland.

Herbs: bugleweed, lemon balm, blue vervain, myrrh, guggul (mild thyroid stimulant).

**Tonic:**

A rather general term for herbs or processes that are strengthening and beneficial to a specific organ, specific tissues, processes of the body, or to general health. Indications: General weakness, debility, neurasthenia, poor digestion, coldness, fatigue, depression, depressed immune function.

Herbs: Fo Ti, Dong Quai, Ginseng, Siberian Ginseng, Astragalus, Ligustrum, gentian.

**Uterine Tonic:**

An herb that is said to improve the nutrition and function of the uterus, such as false unicorn root or dang quai.

Herbs: dong quai, false unicorn root.

**Vasodilator:**

An herb that widens the blood vessels, lowering blood pressure. Indications: Hypertension, high blood pressure.  
Herbs: Garlic, Ginseng, Passion Flower, Hawthorn, Lime Blossom.

**Veinotonic:** The herb or formula has a strengthening effect on the veins of the body. It might be useful for hemorrhoids, varicose veins, and other conditions.

**Vermifuge:**

Causes expulsion of intestinal worms; an anthelmintic. Indications: Intestinal worms.  
Herbs: Garlic, Rue, Tansy, Wormseed, Wormwood, Quassia.

**Vulnerary:**

An herb which stops external bleeding and promotes the healing of wounds.  
Indications: Cuts, wounds.  
Herbs: Plantain, Golden seal, St. John's wort, Calendula.