

# MEDICINAL PLANTS

## Uses of the different parts of the Neem Plant

**Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)** is a fascinating and versatile plant and using neem has many benefits . All parts of the neem tree are useful. The most widely used parts of the neem tree are the seed kernels, the leaves and the bark. It is an oldest tradition used effectively in dental care. It has antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral, antidiabetic, and antiinfertility properties.

### Neem Seeds

- The fruit of the neem plant looks a lot like an olive. The flesh surrounds a seed that contains one or several kernels. Besides that the oil is valued for its huge range of medicinal uses. The seed kernels contain the highest concentration of active substances in the neem plant. Pressing them for oil is one way to get at them, but you can also make various extracts from the seeds.
- Neem oil, the most popular neem plant product, is made by pressing the neem seed kernels.
- The kernels can contain as much as 50% oil.
- In the western world the seed oil is mostly known and valued as a safe and effective insecticide. Neem oil is very popular with organic gardeners.
- It is also used as a natural insect repellent, a safe and more efficient alternative to the harmful deet.
- Neem seed oil is also an ingredient in many skin care products. In India most of the neem oil is used in neem soap, but there are also neem shampoos, lotions, creams etc.
- The seed oil can be toxic and should not be taken internally.

### Neem Leaves

- The leaves of the neem plant are the most versatile and most easily available resource. They contain the same active ingredients as the seeds, just in much lower concentration.
- Although the leaves of the neem tree have been used this way for thousands of years in India, Neem is a very powerful herb.
- The topical use of neem leaf extracts and leaf paste is safe.
- Skin care and the treatment of skin disorders is where the neem plant really shines .Leaf pastes and extracts are used in skin care products, hair oils, in neem toothpastes and mouth washes, and they also have lots of medicinal uses.
- Many herbalists recommend chewing the leaves, taking capsules of dried leaf, or drinking the bitter tea.
- The leaves cleanse the blood, help the gastrointestinal system (ulcers!), support the liver, and strengthen the immune system, to name just some of the most popular benefits

- It is extremely effective in eliminating bacterial and fungal infections or parasites
- Its antiviral activity can treat warts and cold sores
- It soothes inflammation and reduces redness
- It moisturizes the skin and keeps it supple
- It can even lighten scars and pigmentation.
- Examples of such uses are scabies and acne treatment.

### **Neem Bark**

- The bark of the neem tree is not used as much as the seeds or leaves, for obvious reasons. There is not as much of it, it does not regenerate as quickly, and it is slightly more difficult to use. Because of its dry and hard nature the ingredients are more difficult to extract.
- However, in one medicinal field the bark is the recommended plant part to use. That field is dental care. The bark contains a higher concentration of active ingredients than the leaves, and is especially high in ingredients with antiseptic and anti-inflammatory action. Neem bark is highly effective when treating gingivitis (gum disease).

### **Neem Twigs**

- Chewing young, supple branches, and then using them as a toothbrush, prevents cavities and gum disease
- Indian villagers have used this method for centuries (Though in modern India [neem toothpaste](#) , [daatun](#) , mouthwashes, and bark powders are the preferred method)

### **Neem Cake**

- Neem cake is a strange name for the pulp that is left after extracting neem seed oil from kernels
- It is indeed edible, at least for animals, and is sometimes used as fodder
- However, the most common and recommended use is as a soil amendment and fertilizer

### **Neem Flowers**

- The flowers of the neem plant have a lovely, sweet, honey-like smell
- It is quite intense, noticeable from a distance, but never overpowering
- Bees love neem flowers and neem honey is popular
- The flower oil is also used in aromatherapy and has a calming and restorative effect