

## ~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Joe Pyeweed

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**There are several wild plants that are in full bloom now. I know one is Joe Pyeweed and I think the other is Iron Weed. Since they're so plentiful, I know they must be good for something. What do you know about these "weeds".**

You are talking 'shades of purple' here, a truly healing experience just to look at. Nature provides us with such wonderful medicinal plants in our own back yard and these are two very exciting ones, to be sure.

**Joe Pyeweed (Eupatorium purpureum):** Some of this herbs common names are- Sweet Joe-Pye Weed, Gravelroot, Hempweed, Joe-Pie, Queen of the Meadow, Kidney Root, Fever Weed and Purple Boneset. Related species are: Hemp Agrimony and Boneset. The name Eupatorium is from Eupator ('Mithridates Eupator' King of Parthis, 120-63 BC). He is said to have discovered this plant's medicinal effectiveness. The common name 'Joe Pye' is the name of a Native American that helped the early colonists to cure fevers and outbreaks of Typhus by teaching them to make an infusion of the leaves and roots. It was also used as treatment for arthritic and rheumatic pain also.

E. purpureum was listed in the U.S. Pharmacopeia from 1820-1842. All members of this family of plants were listed as: diuretic (stimulates flow of urine), stimulant (increases rate of nervous activity), astringent (tightens and relaxes mucous membranes, as needed, reducing secretions and bleeding), emetic (causing vomiting in large doses) and cathartic in excessive dosage (a drastic purgative). All of these documented activities work together to make Joe-Pye a valuable healing plant. It was regarded as a virtual 'cure-all' in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Perhaps this is because it stimulates the body's resistance to viral and bacterial infections, while encouraging sweating (another way the body has of eliminating toxic waste material).

Eupatorium contains sesquiterpene lactones, polysaccharides, flavonoids, diterpenes, sterols and volatile. The sesquiterpene lactones and polysaccharides are highly immunostimulant.

As one of Joe Pye-weed's names Gravel Root, indicates, it is a valuable herb for urinary tract problems, because it helps to prevent the formation of kidney and bladder stones. Gravel root is also useful for cystitis, urethritis, prostate enlargement, rheumatism and gout. The reason for its usefulness in treating these conditions is because it aids the body's ability to remove waste via the kidneys. Many of the conditions that we suffer from today appear to be from an accumulation of toxic waste material our bodies.

Joe Pye Weed is a perennial that grows 5-6 feet high. The stem is greenish, rigid, erect and partially hollow. There are purplish spots where the leaves join the stem. The oblong, pointed leaves are rough and crinkly and have a scent similar to vanilla when crushed. Tubular flowers appear in dome-shaped clusters from August through September and their color ranges from dull pink to purple. You can't help but notice this herb in its full profusion as you travel our back, country roads this time of year. It grows in rich lowlands and on the banks of streams, loving moist woods and marshes.

Joe Pye would make an attractive addition to your garden as a colorful backdrop planting. It takes full sun to part shade with well-drained soil. The best way to propagate it is from rootstock division in the fall or winter.

You'll want to gather the flowers and leaves now (dry them for latter use) and the roots in late autumn. For flu symptoms, combine Joe Pye with Yarrow, Elder flowers, Cayenne or Ginger. This is a wonderfully healing plant, but in excess can be harmful. I would use it only when there is infection, as a mild tea and only for a short period of time, until healed.

**Iron Weed** (*Vernonia fasciculata*): This plant has very showy bright purple flowers and grows up to 10 feet tall in fields and along creek banks. You can't miss it! It flowers from July to September and is very abundant in this area. While there is very little information available on Iron Weed, it is listed as a bitter tonic (for the liver), deobstruent (removes obstructions by opening the

natural passages of the body) and alternative (gradually converts an unhealthy condition of an organ to a healthy one). The leaves or powdered root in the form of a poultice makes an excellent application to tumors. It sounds to me like this herb warrants further investigating.