

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Meadowsweet

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**Do you know what that big plant is that's growing along the road at the bottom of Donegal hill and near the bridge on Four Mill Run? It's about 3 feet tall and has big leaves and clusters of white flowers. It has been blooming for about a week or two.**

I remember seeing this plant last summer, growing just down over the hill from where I live. Like you, I just had to know what it was. I was ecstatic when I found it for two reasons: Its name intrigued me and my research had revealed that this plant was good for a variety of ailments. I, of course, gathered some seeds, which I planted in my hotbed last February. This wonderful plant that you've discovered is Meadowsweet. I'm sad to report that the seeds I planted did not germinate and I don't know why. Perhaps I'll try planting some roots this fall to see if I have better luck with it.

**Meadowsweet** (*Filipendula ulmaria*) - is also known as Queen of the Meadow or Meadow Queen. It is a perennial, growing up to 4 or 5 feet tall, and having tufts of delicate, graceful, cream-white flowers, which bloom from June to September. These flowers are small, clustered close together in irregularly branched cymes, and have a very sweet smell. I think it would make a wonderful background to smaller plantings, or around a pond area where you want to create a peaceful setting and pleasant aroma.

Meadowsweet is considered an ornamental, which loves rich, moist soil and full or partial sun. It dislikes acid soil, and is prone to powdery mildew in dry

conditions. You can find it growing in this area near creeks, as it prefers damp ditches, and the banks of streams and rivers. Propagate by seed in the spring, or by root division in the fall. The leaves and flowering tops are harvested in summer when the flowers are open.

As for Meadowsweet's medicinal properties: In the 1890's "salicylic acid" was isolated from this plant to make the first aspirin. These Salicylates (aspirin-like substances) act to reduce inflammation and relieve pain. But, unlike aspirin, which at high doses causes gastric ulceration, Meadowsweet has a combination of salicylates, tannins and other constituents, which act to protect the inner lining of the stomach and intestines, while providing the anti-inflammatory benefit of the salicylates.

This is a perfect example of how- the natural combination of the herb's phytochemicals act together in a synthesized manner for healing, but when one of the constituents is isolated, such as a salicylate, the healing process is hindered, or side-effects occur.

Meadowsweet was one of the most sacred herbs of the Druids, and has been a long-standing 'folk remedy' in much of Europe. Today, we respect it most for its ability to reduce acid indigestion, relieve the pain and inflammation of arthritic and rheumatic conditions (including gout), and as a safe remedy for diarrhea. Use Meadowsweet for hyperacidity, heartburn, gastritis and peptic ulcers. It's also good for influenza, respiratory tract problems, and fever. Meadowsweet is recommended for dropsy and other problems with water retention, and all bladder and kidney ailments. It's used with other herbs for irritable bowel syndrome too. Externally, a decoction is used as a wash for wounds or sore eyes.

I would suspect that because it's considered an "alternative" (Increases vitality through improving the breakdown and excretion of waste products) herb, and has antacid effects, Meadowsweet probably has a stabilizing effect on the body's P.H. (acid/alkaline) balance in general. This would explain why it is frequently used as a blood tonic and cleanser.

So, this would be a good herb for your garden. It will not only add to its beauty and aroma, but will also be useful for the flu, fevers, diarrhea, pain of inflammation, stomach problems, heartburn, kidney infections, and as a wash for all wounds. An infusion of one ounce of the herb (leaves or flowers) to a pint (2 cups) of water is the usual mode of administration. Sweetened with honey, it is a very pleasant tasting drink both for invalids, and for ordinary use.