



Presenting October's Plant Ally:

Boneset

Common names: Agueweed, Bois Perfolié, Crosswort, Eupatoire, Eupatoire Perfoliée, Eupatorio, Feverwort, Herbe à Fièvre, Herbe à Souder, Indian Sage, Sweating Plant, Teasel, Thoroughwort, Vegetable Antimony

Botanical name: Eupatorium perfoliatum

Family: Asteraceae

Temperature: Cool-Cold, Dry

Taste: Aromatic, bitter

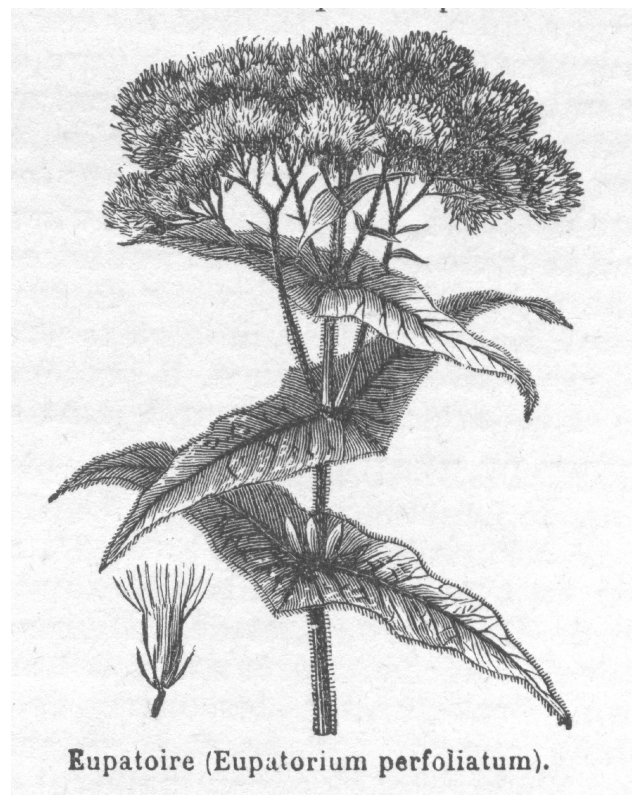
Parts Used: Aerial parts (leaves, flowers)

Constituents: Flavonoids, sesquiterpene lactones, polysaccharides, pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PA's), volatile oils

Actions/Functions: Astringent, bitter, bone-setting, diaphoretic (relaxing), digestive tonic, emetic, expectorant, febrifuge, hepatic, "immune scavenging," immune-stimulant, influenza specific, relaxant,

October oscillates: days crisp & dry, days damp & boggy... like a great game of tug o' war, October passes in much this way the whole month through. It is, after all, a season of change. It is a season where the wind will just as easily whisper you secrets from the spirits as it will get caught in the body, chilling you to the bone. Perhaps this is the influence of the airy Libran scales which astrologically rule over much of the month, or maybe it is the windy, winding Vata nature that Ayurveda imbues the season with. Whatever the system you follow there is no escaping the metronome rhythm we are collectively in this time of the year.

It is this same motion, the to & fro of the metronome, that has most recently struck me as such a prominent signature of Boneset. This deeply bitter, beautiful plant with its grey-white flowers keeps its home in wet, damp, boggy places of the Northeast, parts of the Midwest, Eastern Canada, & can even be found trailing down to Florida & Texas. The leaves are quite special in that they hug & conjoin around the stalk, forming a cup-shape where they meet in the center, in an alternate leaf pattern up & down the stalk. This quality is where the species name, *perfoliatum*, comes from because it appears as if the stem or stalk is *perforating the foliage or leaves*.



I first learned about Boneset from 7Song as remedy specific for colds, fevers, & influenza. I remember there was one week in early Autumn when it seemed my entire class got sick all at the same time. We were promptly

dosed with a strong infusion that mostly contained Boneset & even today I can still taste the achingly bitter flavor of it, though it was eight years ago now. It felt truly medicinal in a way I had never experienced an herb before, I craved its bitterness & was soothed by it, felt completely taken care of as it coursed through my body.

Though I don't often hear much talk of Boneset in modern herbal circles, this plant has long been considered one of the most important remedies to have in one's medicine cabinet for cold & flu season due to its specificity for influenza & fevers. Even more specifically, it is indicated for painful fevers. Fevers in which the whole body is sore & aches, seemingly down to the bones, & that vacillate back & forth between chills & sweats so there is no comfort in covering up or relief in stripping down (notice the alternating theme here as indicated by the leaf pattern!). As a cooling plant & relaxing diaphoretic, it does not help to increase sweating. Rather, it helps the muscles relax tension enough, allowing circulation to flow properly, thus helping to release the fever & relieve the pain aforementioned. Boneset also addresses deep immunity because it stimulates white blood cell production within the bone marrow. Jim McDonald refers to Boneset as a "deep immune scavenger" meaning that it helps to dispel any lingering bacterial/viral infections that you weren't able to get rid of the first time around & so will flare up again when given the opportunity. He notes that Boneset will help to break this pattern by scavenging for the dregs of infection & rid the infection once & for all.

Because of the bitter nature of Boneset, it is a wonderful digestive remedy & nervine. All bitters immediately drop us into the parasympathetic or "rest & digest" mode of our primordial nervous systems—which in part is why they help to stimulate digestive functions in the first place! This also means that bitters are wonderful relaxing nervines, grounding us into our bodies, & bringing us into a state of calm contentment. Boneset also seems to have a toning action on the entire digestive system, especially the gall-bladder which is where our bile is produced & released, & is especially nice for bringing appetite back to those who have lost theirs from an illness or distress.

So, does Boneset help to set bones? I believe you will hear many different perspectives on this matter depending on where you look or who you ask. The use of Boneset as a bone healer is primarily one that was practiced & shared by American Indians, whose wisdom with the plant went far beyond considering what it could be “good for.” With that said, it did not surprise me to learn that it was a white Professor in the 19th century who discredited the use of Boneset for broken bones, claiming it was only a remedy for fever. Though I have never personally used Boneset for broken bones, I would not hesitate to do so & there are herbalists who do consider Boneset to be a wonderful remedy for healing bone or structural issues. One of those people is Matthew Wood & if you’d like to hear a rather lovely rant from him about this, [then follow this link ~](#)

On an emotional level in the body I have found that Boneset is gently but firmly grounding & centering: it not only soothes us but also brings us into awareness of where we are at in the moment. In this way, boneset is truly wonderful with helping us find alignment. I especially have liked offering it when one is in the midst of a transition, or when one’s structure has shifted / changed but the Spirit has yet to catch up. It seems that Boneset can help to set the person in space & time while helping to restore strength & vitality with a gentle grace.

This brings me to the flower essence. Just last month, two of my dear friends & I made our way to western New York to spend time in the lush forests & fields & fens there. This area of New York is simply dappled with Boneset. You can find it growing from roadsides, stream edges, & the in midst of mucky swamps. Emma, Mindy, & I had been drawn to Boneset for our entire trip, so on a misty morning, in a procession-like manner, we walked along allowing the Boneset to unveil itself to us. We happened upon a stretch of field filled with cricket song, guarded by writing spiders, & singing with the soft rustle of running water from a little stream. It was here we found our Boneset, at the edge of where the field met the water. This essence seems to be all about divine balance & perfect tension; connectivity & collaboration; holding space & being held from behind or above or all around. We kept thinking about Boneset as a guardian angel, a spirit or energy who has your back, who is right behind you. This essence reminds us to go slow & steady, that the journey is both in arriving & in having arrived. In its lesson of divine balance & perfect tension it reminds us to relax where there is tension &



resistance. It allows us to be like the silk of a spider's web or the bone. Both hold us together, they give us form & structure, they have our backs our bellies & all the rest of us—they are what allow for connectivity. Though we think of spider's webs as delicate & easy to destroy, their silk is actually stronger than steel. Though we think of bones as hard, solid things... they really are porous, always forming, quite alive & warm & flexible; they are at their very core vulnerable. I believe it is here where the secret medicine of Boneset lives: that perhaps the guardian spirit is within us, has been within us all along, holding us as we move & grow & break through the world, helping us remain open, porous, & vulnerable in a world that too often demands of us otherwise.

There are many ways to make remedies with Boneset. For its diaphoretic quality, it is best to make a hot infusion—the act of drinking hot water will aid in the sweating process which helps to break the fever. Same goes for a tincture, just add some to hot water or a hot tea of another cold/flu herb. You could also make a cold infusion, which would help to cut some of the bitter flavor ever so slightly. Even better would be to make an electuary or infused honey to avoid the bitter or for children who need a spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down. I imagine it would make an amazing liniment to help deal with the discomfort of fever, especially if added to a bath. I would also recommend making a salve or infused oil of the leaves & flowers, for structural issues, as well as to heal & repair broken bones or to apply when bone dancing, as described below.

A Ritual in Bone Dancing ::::::::::

- On the next New Moon, wear some comfortable clothes & clear space in the largest room in your home, so that you have plenty of floor space
- Light some candles & turn any electric lights off
- Take a few nice deep breaths, allowing your inhales to reach into your bones, your exhales to push off of their milky platforms
- *Download or stream this album*, keeping your attention focused on the bone breathing you have been doing
- Allow yourself to be moved from this place, to the sounds of the music playing
- Dance for as long as you are able to, moving as your bones direct you, releasing any fever held in them, repairing any misalignment they may have accrued
- If you need to rest or reflect, lay your back flat on the floor & sink into your bone breathing again
- Repeat as desired

Lovingly yours /
Chanelle + Boneset