



The Observer St. Kitts - Nevis

THE FEDERATION'S POLITICALLY INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

DR. CHARLES' HEALTH CHAT

***ALOE VERA:* Miracle Caribbean Plant ?**

Scores of stories and folklore abound about the miraculous properties of the plant *ALOE VERA*, which grows with ease in our beautiful Caribbean climate. All over the world toady, from Zanzibar, Cape Town, to Barbados, aloe is venerated as a medicinal plant of which its extracts have found their most common use in skin preparations. Aloe treats most effectively, skin inflammations and irritations, including, but not limited to, sunburn, windburn, rash, rhagades, eczema, psoriasis, acne, pimples, etc., to name just a few. But its healing properties do not end just there...

Most botanists agree, along with copious historical evidence, that aloes originated in the dry climates of Africa. There are tales of the mention of Aloes in the Bible, but annotated references claim that the aloes mentioned are *aloe woods* (*Lignum aloes*) from the East Indies, the oil of which the Hebrews used to anoint their bodies during burial ceremonies.

A famous story exists that the Caribbean explorer *Christopher Columbus* in his log of October 21, 1492, he wrote, "I see thousands of sorts of trees... and thousands of sorts of plants... and of the whole lot I only recognize Aloes much of which I ordered on board." It is believed that Columbus mistook the *Agave* (Century Plant) for Aloe vera. The *Agave americana* is similar in appearance, having spear-shaped leaves, grows commonly here on Nevis as the nasty thorn ridden plant which once started, spreads with ease. Unlike our Aloe, it has thinner leaves with a white stripe up its center and does not confer the medicinal skin juice.



Aloe Vera

Today, the uses of aloe are going beyond skin preparations, as its antibiotic and antifungal properties have found their place in helping those with chronic infections. Since 1934 when C.E. Collins published a report on the treatment of *radiation injury* with aloe, its properties for medicinal use have taken a serious concern. The after effects of radiation burn point to certain mechanisms of cellular physiology beyond those of relieving sunburn by mere application of the *aloe jelly* for reduction of heat and inflammation in thermal injury.

Aloe has now been shown to have significant antimicrobial properties. Its extracts inhibit the growth of such infectious organisms as staph, strep, and candida yeast, all of which can trouble us from time to time. This confirms its folklore and effective use for drinking *aloe water* for

stomach ulcer, diarrhea, and constipation. It is known to stimulate functions of the liver and intestinal secretions in general, helping relieve “non-active” hemorrhoids.

In Honychurch’s *Caribbean Wild Plants & their Uses*, she lists Aloe as being used in Barbados and Jamaica as a tea for colds and headaches, promotes appetite, digestion and menstrual flow.

In *Marie Galante* it is used in rum for diabetes and gas, and for rubbing the breasts during weaning. The jelly of the leaf can be used against eye infections.

Their are many ways to use the Aloe leaf. A common method by the author is to break off a leaf at the base of the plant. Then take a knife and carefully slice off the thorns at the edge. Then the hard, green leaf can be sliced off much like filleting a fish’s skin. This exposes the jelly in the center, so beneficial when applied to the skin after a day at the beach. The jelly applied at night helps rejuvenate the face and remove wrinkles.

Another method shown to the author by a Puerto Rican herbalist is to simply break off a small leaf, slice off the thorns along the edge, and stick the leaf in a large glass or pitcher of water. The sap will gently bleed into the water making its own tea. Drink one-half a cup first thing in the morning as a tonic. Keep the aloe water in the refrigerator, and replace the water as it is consumed. This method will regularize the bowels, offset constipation, and kill off candida yeast, so common today among those who eat devitalized foods and infected meats.

Links

www.privynfo.org

www.schoolofnaturalmedicine.info