

UpS List of Herbs & Analogs

Compiled by Jane Bothwell (March 2000, revised 2024)

After introduction to the UpS list of “At-Risk” plants, students always ask, “Well, what can we use in its place?” Often the choice is simple: choose a cultivated species rather than one harvested from the wild. When cultivated species are not available, then it is best to find a plant analog. An analog is something having an analogy or similarity to something else. For our purposes, this indicates parallels in function or end results between two or more medicinal herbs.

In most instances, it is important and necessary to use a variety of analogs for the at-risk herb because an analog generally satisfies only some of the therapeutic actions of a particular plant species and does not demonstrate all medicinal actions of that plant. It is sometimes difficult to find replacements for our tried-and-true herb friends, but it also can be very satisfying and will expand your expertise, while helping to replant our future.

Whenever possible, use what grows around you. Often those herbs hold the most potential for helping you to heal. Why not choose alien (non-native) plants for food and medicine, leaving the more fragile native plant species to flourish? Many alien plants are extremely powerful medicinals and will be a welcome addition to your medicine chest.

The following is an alphabetical list of most of the United Plant Savers “At-Risk” medicinal plants, each followed by suggested analogs. This list is compiled by the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of UpS.

American ginseng (<i>Panax quinquefolius</i>)	At Risk	Purchase organic roots only; even so-called “woods-grown” roots are suspect.
Chinese ginseng (<i>Panax ginseng</i>)		for increasing energy, stamina, fortifying immune system
Siberian ginseng (<i>Eleutherococcus senticosus</i>)		adaptogenic, normalizes energy levels, increases productivity, immunopotentiating
Ashwagandha (<i>Withania somnifera</i>)		strengthens sexual energy; replenishes nervous system exhaustion
Astragalus (<i>Astragalus membranaceus</i>)		protective and recuperative immune tonic
Oats (<i>Avena</i> spp.)		replenish nervous system
Arnica (<i>Arnica</i> spp.)	In Review	Cultivated sources only; use all aerial parts rather than just flowers; <i>Arnica montana</i> is threatened in its entire range in Europe.
Rescue Remedy Bach Flower Essence		topically & internally reduces trauma
Comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>)		musculoskeletal concerns
St. John’s wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)		restores damaged nerve tissue, analgesic
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		bruising
Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)		anti-inflammatory
Bloodroot (<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>)	At Risk	
Celandine (<i>Chelidonium majus</i>)		dissolves warts; contains sanguinarine
Turmeric (<i>Curcuma longa</i>)		may resolve skin cancer; anti-inflammatory and astringent to gum tissue

Self heal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>)		anti-inflammatory and astringent to gum tissue
Spilanthes (<i>Spilanthes acmella</i>)		stimulating, decay fighting mouthwash; tonifies gums
Blue Cohosh (<i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>)	At Risk	
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)		uterine tonic
Raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		uterine tonic
Cottonroot bark (<i>Gossypium herbaceum</i>)		oxytocic (promotes or accelerates childbirth by stimulating uterine muscles). Caution: not to be taken during pregnancy.
Pennyroyal (<i>Mentha pulegium</i>)		emmenagogue
Cascara Sagrada (<i>Rhamnus purshiana</i>)	At Risk	Thin young saplings at base of tree. If necessary to cut down tree, leave high stump to resprout. Let cure one year before using.
Senna (<i>Senna alexandrina</i>)		contains anthraquinones; powerful laxative
Other Rhamnus species		very similar action to <i>R. purshiana</i>
Psyllium and Flax seeds		bulk laxatives
Echinacea (<i>Echinacea</i> spp.)	At Risk	Use only cultivated sources; readily available.
Usnea (<i>Usnea</i> spp.)		antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, immune enhancing
Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)		Antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, immune enhancing.
Spilanthes (<i>Spilanthes acmella</i>)		immune tonic, antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral
Astragalus (<i>Astragalus membranaceus</i>)		protective and recuperative immune tonic
Boneset (<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>)		relieves aches and pains of flu
Marshmallow (<i>Althea officinalis</i>)		immune tonic and restorative
Elephant Tree (<i>Bursera microphylla</i>)	Critical	
Myrrh (<i>Commiphora myrrha</i>)		stimulates the immune system; disinfectant, astringent, anti-inflammatory; used as incense
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		immune stimulant, disinfectant, astringent
Eyebright (<i>Euphrasia</i> spp.)	In Review	In US it is scarce. In Europe, there is still ample supply.
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>)		soothing eye wash
Self heal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>)		soothing to mucous membranes
False Unicorn (<i>Chamaelirium luteum</i>)	Critical	Virtually non-existent at this point.
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)		reproductive stimulant
Vitex (<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>)		hormone balancing
Raspberry (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		uterine tonic
Gentian (<i>Gentiana</i> spp.)	At Risk	
Mugwort (<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>)		digestive bitter
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		digestive bitter, febrifuge, antiseptic
Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)		strengthens the digestive system; bitter principles
Goldenseal (<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>)	At Risk	Presently listed with CITES
Barberry (<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>)		alterative, antimicrobial; contains berberine
Usnea (<i>Usnea</i> spp.)		heals topical infections; eyewash, antibiotic, antiviral
Garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)		antibiotic; dries mucous membranes
Plantain (<i>Plantago</i> spp.)		antiseptic, alterative; heals wounds

Goldthread (<i>Coptis</i> spp.)	At Risk	
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Raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		uterine tonic
Kava, Wild Hawaiian (<i>Piper methysticum</i>)	At Risk	Use cultivated sources only.
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>)		gently calming and soothing
Mugwort (<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>)		digestive bitter; induces vivid dream states
Valerian (<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>)		sedating nervine
Hops (<i>Humulus lupulus</i>)		sedative, digestive bitter
California poppy (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>)		mood altering nervine
Lady's Slipper Orchid (<i>Cypripedium</i> spp.)	Critical	Delicate forest orchid; use analogs; let it grow.
Lemon balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)		antispasmodic, nervine
Skullcap (<i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i>)		antispasmodic, nervine, sedative, anodyne
Valerian (<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>)		sedating nervine
Lobelia (<i>Lobelia inflata</i>)	In Review	<i>Use cultivated; easy to grow.</i>
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>		milder action; use cultivated
Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)		antispasmodic, expectorant
Hyssop (<i>Hyssop officinalis</i>)		expectorant
Viola (<i>Viola odorata</i>)		expectorant
Skullcap (<i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i>)		antispasmodic, nervine
Lomatium (<i>Lomatium dissectum</i>)	At Risk	Limited range.
Echinacea (cultivated) (<i>Echinacea</i> spp.)		antiviral
St. John's wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)		antiviral
Rosemary (<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>)		respiratory tonic, antiseptic, diaphoretic, antibacterial
Oregon Grape (<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>)	At Risk	Though prolific in the Northwest, it has a limited range.
Garlic (<i>Allium sativum</i>)		antibiotic; dried mucous membranes
Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)		hepatic
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		topical antiseptic
Barberry (<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>)		alterative, antimicrobial; contains berberine
Osha <i>Ligusticum porteri</i>, L. sp.	At Risk	Very limited range.
Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)		anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antibiotic
Elecampane (<i>Inula helenium</i>)		expectorant, respiratory tonic
Marshmallow (<i>Althea officinalis</i>)		soothing to irritated mucous membranes
Lovage (<i>Levisticum officinalis</i>)		for respiratory conditions; antiseptic, diaphoretic, antibacterial, antifungal, antispasmodic
Rosemary (<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>)		clears mucus; astringent

Partridge Berry (<i>Mitchella repens</i>)	At Risk	Delicate, slow growing; when harvested, roots are often pulled, too, thus taking the whole plant.
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)		uterine tonic
Raspberry (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		uterine tonic
Catnip (<i>Nepeta cataria</i>)		antispasmodic
Oats (<i>Avena</i> spp.)		promotes fertility
Pipsissewa (<i>Chimaphila umbellata</i>)	At Risk	
Uva Ursi (<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>)		for urinary tract infections
Goldenrod (<i>Solidago</i> spp.)		for urinary tract infections
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		antiseptic to urinary tract
Slippery Elm (<i>Ulmus rubra</i>)	At Risk	Limit wild harvest to trees struck by natural disasters.
Other <i>Ulmus</i> species		demulcent
Mullein (<i>Verbascum</i> spp.)		demulcent, antitussive; respiratory tonic
Violet (<i>Viola</i> spp.)		demulcent, antitussive; respiratory tonic
Marshmallow (<i>Althea officinalis</i>)		demulcent, antibacterial, antitussive; normalizes digestion
Spikenard (<i>Aralia racemosa, A. californica</i>)	At Risk	
Cultivated ginseng (<i>Panax ginseng, P. quinquefolius</i>)		adaptogen
Siberian ginseng (<i>Eleutherococcus senticosus</i>)		adaptogen
St. John's wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)		antispasmodic
Squirrel Corn (<i>Dicentra canadensis</i>)	At Risk	
Spilanthes (<i>Spilanthes acmella</i>)		reduces tooth pain; helps heal mouth traumas
Clove bud (<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>)		numbs the gums, eases pain
Hops (<i>Humulus lupulus</i>)		sedating and calming to the nervous system
St. John's Wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)		heals and soothes the nerves
Stoneroot (<i>Collinsonia canadensis</i>)	At Risk	Easy to cultivate.
Horse chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>)		hemorrhoids, varicose veins
Parsley root (<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>)		kidney concerns; diuretic
Sundew (<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>)	Critical	Very fragile; use analogs.
Spilanthes (<i>Spilanthes acmella</i>)		for respiratory complaints; antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal
Sage (<i>Salvia officinalis</i>)		sore throats, antibacterial and antiviral actions
Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)		antibacterial, antiviral, respiratory complaints
Trillium a.k.a. Beth root (<i>Trillium erectum</i>)	Critical	Not available for sale anymore; let it grow.
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)		uterine tonic
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)		anti-hemorrhage
Shepherd's purse (<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>)		anti-hemorrhage, astringent
Raspberry (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		tonifies reproductive system
True Unicorn (<i>Aletris farinosa</i>)	At Risk	Let it rest; if given room, it could make a comeback.
Peppermint (<i>Mentha x piperita</i>)		carminative
Spearmint (<i>Mentha spicata</i>)		carminative

Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i>)		carminative
Raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)		uterine tonic
Venus' Fly Trap (<i>Dionaea muscipula</i>)	Critical	Too fragile for wildcrafting.
Echinacea (cultivated) (<i>Echinacea</i> spp.)		immune stimulating
Red Clover (<i>Trifolium pratense</i>)		anti-tumor
Virginia Snakeroot (<i>Aristolochia serpentaria</i>)	At Risk	
Yucca (<i>Yucca</i> spp.)		joint conditions
Dill (<i>Anethum graveolens</i>)		digestive concerns
Fennel (<i>Foenicululm graveolens</i>)		digestive concerns
Ginger (<i>Zingiber officinale</i>)		digestive concerns
Echinacea (cultivated) (<i>Echinacea</i> spp.)		poisonous bites, snakebite, ingested poisons
White Sage (<i>Salvia apiana</i>)	At Risk	Harvest only sprouting tips.
Garden sage (<i>Salvia officinalis</i>)		soothes irritated mucous membranes; eye wash; sore throat
Mugwort (<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>)		smudge
Sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>)		smudge
Wild Indigo (<i>Baptisia tinctoria</i>)	At Risk	Not easy to grow.
Echinacea (cultivated) (<i>Echinacea</i> spp.)		immune stimulating
Spilanthes (<i>Spilanthes acmella</i>)		antimicrobial, fever reducing, antiseptic
Cleavers (<i>Galium</i> spp.)		lymphatic, alterative
Wild Yam (<i>Dioscorea villosa</i>)	At Risk	Greatly overharvested at this time.
Ginger (<i>Zingiber officinale</i>)		morning sickness
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>)		antispasmodic
Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)		liver tonic
Yerba Mansa (<i>Anemopsis californica</i>)	At Risk	Use cultivated supplies only, grows in polluted lowlands of California's agribusiness.
Self heal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>)		astringent to mucous membranes, soothing to mouth and throat inflammation
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolilum</i>)		Antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial
Usnea <i>Usnea</i> sp.		antiviral, antimicrobial
Barberry (<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>)		alterative, antimicrobial; contains berberine