

Materia Medica: Key Poultice/Plaster Herbs

Below are field-friendly, first-aid oriented notes: **properties** → **where/when** → **parts used** → **best applications** → **cautions**.

USNEA (*Usnea* spp.)

Medicinal properties: strong topical antimicrobial activity (especially gram-positive), supportive for reducing infection risk in minor wounds.

Where it grows / harvest: fruticose lichen on branches of conifers/hardwoods; harvest ethically—take only wind-fall or small amounts, avoid stripping living trees.

Parts used: whole lichen, dried.

Best topical uses:

- “Dirty” superficial cuts/scrapes after cleaning
- Early infected-looking minor wounds (localized) as a *poultice-in-cloth* or diluted tincture compress

Cautions: oral usnic acid has been linked to liver injury; keep use **external**



Usnea spp.

PLANTAIN (*Plantago major* / *P. lanceolata*)

Medicinal properties: soothing, cooling, drawing, and wound-mending; traditional use for bites/stings/irritated skin and minor wounds, with supportive phytochemistry discussed in reviews.

Where it grows / harvest: lawns, paths, disturbed soils; harvest clean leaves away from pesticides/dog traffic.

Parts used: fresh leaf (best for emergency), dried leaf rehydrated, or powdered leaf.

Best topical uses:

- Bug bites/stings (fresh “spit poultice” or mashed leaf)
- Minor burns (cooling leaf + aloe)
- Splinters/stingers (drawing plaster)

Cautions: generally very safe topically; watch for plant look-alikes and contamination from sprayed areas.



CALENDULA (*Calendula officinalis*)

Medicinal properties: supports wound healing and skin inflammation; recognized in European/German herbal monograph tradition for external use in wounds.

Where it grows / harvest: garden annual; harvest flowers through bloom season.

Parts used: flower heads/petals (fresh or dried).

Best topical uses:

- Abrasions, superficial cuts, tender skin
- Minor burns (often combined with aloe)
- “After the initial clean” wound support

Cautions: possible sensitivity in people allergic to Asteraceae family (rare but worth mentioning).



COMFREY (*Symphytum officinale*)

Medicinal properties: topical anti-inflammatory + tissue repair support; traditionally used for sprains/strains and “knit-bone” folklore, with clinical discussion of topical use and safety.

Where it grows / harvest: gardens, moist edges; harvest leaf through growing season; root in fall (if using).

Parts used: leaf (common for poultice), root (stronger; advanced).

Best topical uses:

- Sprains/strains (after the first acute swelling stage, or as tolerated)
- Bruises, sore joints, connective tissue support

Cautions (important): contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PA). Keep topical use **time-limited** and **avoid deep/open wounds** or prolonged continuous use.



YARROW (*Achillea millefolium*)

Medicinal properties: classic first-aid plant—styptic/hemostatic + wound supportive; commonly used as fresh poultice or powdered herb on minor cuts, and as compress.

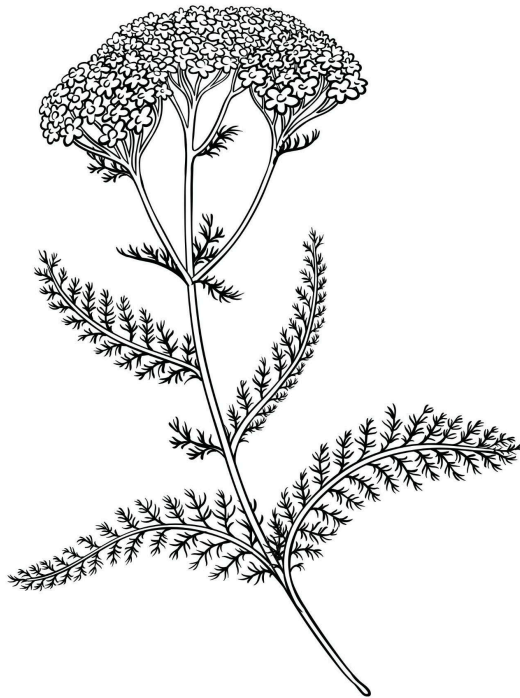
Where it grows / harvest: meadows, roadsides (clean areas); harvest aerial parts in bloom.

Parts used: leaves + flowering tops.

Best topical uses:

- Minor bleeding control (small cuts/abrasions)
- Bruises/sprains as a compress or plaster
- Bites/stings (calming + protective)

Cautions: Asteraceae sensitivity possible; avoid in those with strong reactions to ragweed-family plants.



ARNICA (*Arnica montana*)

Medicinal properties: traditional topical for bruises, sprains, muscle/joint pain and inflammation; official topical monograph guidance emphasizes external use.

Where it grows / harvest: *A. montana* is a European alpine plant; in the Rockies you'll see related genera sometimes called "arnica," but species differ—teach careful ID and sourcing.

Parts used: flower (most common).

Best topical uses (intact skin only):

- Bruises
- Sprains/strains
- Sore muscles (compress/liniment)

Cautions (non-negotiable): do not use on broken skin/open wounds.

