Growing Boneset for Health Benefits

Boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum), a member of the aster family, is also known as white Joe-Pye Weed, an herb that has long been used by both Native Americans and European settlers for its healing properties.

The tiny white flowers, which grow in clusters, blossom during the late summer and early fall seasons. Boneset is plentiful in fields and meadows but can be easily cultivated in gardens. A perennial, boneset grows in planting zones 4-8.

Boneset seeds can be grown indoors or outdoors once the last frost has passed. Growing boneset from seeds indoors instead of outdoors offers several advantages: being very tiny in size, the seeds will not be washed away by the rain or eaten by birds, and it will be easier for you to check the moisture level of the soil as the seeds enter the germination stage. The soil should always be kept moist once you plant boneset seeds.

To grow boneset from seeds indoors, start off with using dampened soil in your starting container. Gently tap the seeds into the surface of the damp soil. Do not cover the tiny seeds with a heavy layer of soil. You can either leave the seeds exposed, or covered with a very thin layer of damp soil. Place the starting container close to a window that has southern exposure, for the seeds require sunlight to germinate. Check the soil every 24 hours to make sure it remains damp so the seeds can germinate. If the soil gets dry, lightly water the soil. Once the seeds germinate into plants, they can be transplanted outside once the last frost of the season has passed.

Boneset will grow well in partial shade as well as full

sunlight. The plants will grow from 2 – 5′ tall so allow between 18 – 24” of space for each plant. Boneset stalks are sturdy and will not require support of any kind. Water established plants once a week, and twice a week during dry periods.

Boneset tea is a diaphoretic, expectorant, tonic and febrifuge when taken for colds and influenza. As a diaphoretic, boneset produces perspiration, thus causing fevers to pass quickly. It is an expectorant as it removes excess mucus from the bronchial tubes should the patient have difficulty breathing. Boneset has tonic properties that strengthens internal and external tissue, which makes it suitable for healing bruises, cuts and scrapes.

To make boneset tea, use a proportion of one ounce of dried boneset leaves and flowers to a pint of boiled water. Strain the leaves from the tea. Drink 2 to 3 cups of boneset tea a day until the cold or flu has reached its end. The tea will also help individuals with emphysema, asthma, and bronchitis. For use as an internal tonic, mix a teaspoon of boneset powder in a cup of cold water for drinking and take several times a day.

A poultice can also be made from boneset for use on cuts, broken bones, or sprains. Use a tablespoon of dried boneset which has been crushed into powder form – a mortar and pestle can be used for this purpose – and thoroughly blend into a tablespoon of cocoa butter. Alternately, the powdered boneset can also be mixed with some warm water to form a poultice, then applied to sprains, broken bones, arthritic joints, or bruises.

Sources and Further Reading:

- http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/
- http://www.outsidepride.com/seed/flower-seed/eupatorium/eupatorium-boneset.html

- http://www.heirloom-organics.com/guide/va/guidetogrowingboneset.html
- http://www.herbal-supplement-resource.com/boneset-herb.html