

MEMÓRIA DA TERRA

~ Cycles of study with Native Plants and Ancient Wisdom ~

BRAMBLE BERRY

(*Rubus fruticosus* L.)



Family: Rosaceae

Origin: Europe, Asia, North America. Fossils of this plant date back 34 million years in the Americas.

Element and Planet: Earth. Mars/Venus.

Actions: Astringent, Antioxidant, Vulnerary, Anti-inflammatory, Antidiarrheal, Uterine Tonic and Mild Emenagogue.

Energetics: Cooling. Drying.

Medicinal Properties and Uses: Like all red berries, Blackberries are rich in antioxidants and vitamins (A, B and C). Rich also in tannins, glycosides and many acids.

As a vulnerary, it stops external bleeding and reduces inflammation of wounds. To heal from scratches of the bramble's spikes, simply crush the leaves of the plant and apply them topically.

The tea from the leaves is a good treatment for diarrhea, dysentery, mouth ulcers, inflammation of the gums, anemia and the flu.

For problems of the mouth and throat, a warm infusion can be used also to gargle.

The fresh young leaves can be chewed to relief headaches and are an excellent source of vitamins.

The berries are used in the treatment of diabetes, help to reduce fever and support cardiovascular health.

Finally, the Bramble contains fragarine, an alkaloid that tones and relaxes the pelvic area and uterus. Through this action, it helps regulate menstrual bleeding, supporting both dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps and little bleeding) and menorrhagia (excessive bleeding). It's a mild emmenagogue, but it acts specially as a uterine tonic.

Identification, Habitat and Ecology: Growing in bushes, with strong sharp spikes, shaped as a cat's claw, the flowers are white to rose and the berries become black when ripe.

The bramble is a very important species that has a fundamental ecological role. As a pioneer, adapts easily to all kinds of soil, although it prefers rich and moistened soils. Grows better in the sun, although can also prosper in partial shade. Grows in forest edges and meadows, rural roads, abandoned lands and many other places.

Thanks to her dense root network, stabilizes the soil and prevents erosion, helping to prepare disturbed soil for new species to arrive. Under the protection of the dense and spiky bushes, young trees survive from predators, allowing the slow regeneration of the native forest.

For the wild life, the bramble is like a restaurant and hotel.

The flowers are a vital source of nectar and pollen for hundreds of species of pollinators. In the end of summer, a wide number of birds and mammals feast on the berries, preparing for the scarcity of winter.

Small mammals and birds use the impenetrable bushes to protect themselves from predators.

History and Cultural Uses: The harvest of wild blackberries is probably one of the few ancestral foraging practices that are still alive today and it dates back a very long time, since pre historical times. During the American civil war, soldiers would stop combat in order to harvest bramble leaves for the treatment of wounds, diarrhea and dysentery. In Scotland there is a tradition of making protection crowns with Ivy, Rowan and Bramble.

In some rural areas of Britain, a very ill person would be made to pass under a natural Bramble arch, as to lock the disease on the spikes and heal the sickness.

This plant has been also used for basketry and dyeing of clothes.

Folklore and Mythology: In English and Irish folklore, it is forbidden to harvest blackberries after St. Michael's day (29th of September), as the Devil pissed or spitted on them. This brings an ancestral popular wisdom, as the weather gets more humid, it's more likely to grow fungus and bacteria on the berries.

For the old Celts, the Wild Blackberry symbolized the triple Goddess (Maiden, Mother and Crone), due to the change of color of the fruit, from green to red to black. The berries were associated with the Goddess Brigid and connected with the fairy people and the underworld (the branches root back down).

The Bramble symbolizes vital force, regeneration, protection and wisdom. It reminds us that through hard and dedicated work, we can taste a sweet reward.