

## ***Rubus idaeus***

**Other common names:** Raspberry, Raspbis, Hindberry, Bramble of Mount Ida, Brambleberry

**Family:** Rosaceae

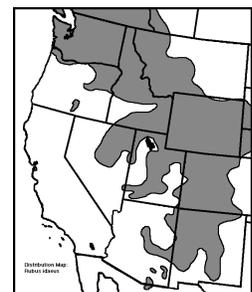
**Authored by:** Amanda Benson

**Parts used:** Leaves, berries.



**Botanical description:** Culpepper claims that raspberry, he calls it brambleberry, is “... is so wel known that it needeth no Description.”<sup>3</sup> However, this doesn't truly seem sufficient. Raspberry is a shrubby plant with long bent over canes with leaves off the stems in threes. The leaves are ovate in shape with a serrate edge, green on top and silver underneath. The flowers are white with five petals, five sepals, and many stamens. The fruit is a red aggregate of drupelets. Each drupelet contains a single seed. The aggregate berry when picked leaves behind a white conical core. The stems become woody with age and display prickles in profusion.

**Habitat:** Raspberries grow most often in areas where the soil has been disturbed, such as forest clearings or fields. Native to Canada and North America, it grows from British Columbia down to New



Mexico. Grows well in moist temperate regions, and will spread easily unless cut back.

**Taste:** Hot infusion of the leaf: Bitter, astringent, sweet, green, full and oily, cooling  
Berry: Sour, sweet, cooling and extremely tasty over vanilla ice cream

**Energetic properties:** Cooling and drying.

**Doctrine of Signatures:** The arrangement of raspberry leaves off the stem is that of one large leaf representing the uterus flanked by two smaller leaves that represent the ovaries; this reminds us that raspberry leaves work on the womb. The undersides of raspberry leaves are silvery, giving us insight that the leaves also have a connection to the moon and therefore woman and the menstrual cycle.

### **Scientific Summary Section:**

Main constituents: tannins, flavonoids

Main actions: astringent, parturient, uterine tonic

**Constituents:** Flavonoids: Kaempferol and Quercetin as well as many glycosides of both; tannins: including gallotannins and ellagitannins; fruit sugar: notably xylitol; volatile oil; pectin; citric acid; malic acid; calcium, magnesium, thiamine, niacin, carotenes and trace minerals. A few sources list an alkaloid called fragarine.

*Above Left: Photo, “Raspberry”<sup>7</sup>*

*Above Right: “Rubus idaeus: distribution map”, Michael Moore<sup>8</sup>*

**Pharmacodynamics:** The astringent qualities of the tannins perform a number of important actions associated with *Rubus idaeus*. These actions include tightening the tissues in the mouth and GI tract by binding to proteins. This has also been postulated as the main reason for its action on tonifying the uterus, but since tannins have such low absorption into the blood this is not well understood.<sup>10</sup>

Flavonoids have been shown to have antioxidant properties which may inhibit cell degradation by binding to free radicals, or assisting vitamin C in binding to free radicals.<sup>10</sup> Flavonoids have a variety of other actions depending on the flavonoid including anti-inflammatory and anti-allergy properties.<sup>10</sup> In clinical studies Quercetin, which is found in *Rubus idaeus* in small quantities, has been found to be helpful in treating many GI troubles such as inflammatory bowel disease, peptic ulcer and gastritis.<sup>10</sup>

The alkaloid fragarine has been said to have effects on the contractility of the uterus, however Kerry Bone says that there is no source information or chemical structure for this compound and it may not exist.<sup>2</sup> Notably most sources that list chemical constituents mention no alkaloids at all.



Above: Photo, "*Rubus idaeus*", Henrietta Kress<sup>6</sup>

**Pharmacokinetics:** Tannins not highly bioavailable minimal absorption, mostly have action on cells that come in contact with them.<sup>10</sup> Flavonoids are thought to have a generally low bioavailability but evidence is misleading at present.<sup>10</sup> Volatile oils are composed of low molecular weight terpenoids and phenlpropanoids that are highly lipophyllic. This makes volatile oils highly bioavailable and can be directly absorbed through the skin and when inhaled through tissue in the nasal cavities and lungs.<sup>10</sup>

**Indications and effects:** Traditional use of *Rubus Idaeus* has been to aid in childbirth. Raspberry leaf acts on the tone of the uterus, increasing the contractility of the uterine walls.<sup>1,9,11</sup> This action on the uterus makes for more useful contractions during labor, as well as helps the uterus return back to its normal shape and elasticity.<sup>1,11</sup> Rich in vitamin C complex, thiamine, niacin, carotenes, calcium, magnesium and trace minerals, *R. idaeus* aids in the health of the fetus and mother, and also increases and enriches milk flow after birth.<sup>1</sup> This same action on the uterus acts as an emmenagogue and can be used for restoring weak or absent menstrual cycles.

The tannins act as a parturient, toning the membranes in the gut by binding to proteins in the intestinal wall, its mild action is especially good for children. The tannins also contribute to healing canker sores in the mouth, bleeding gums and other mouth complaints mainly through astringent action. Both the fruits and leaves have antioxidant properties due to high flavonoid content, and the fruit is a mild laxative. Judith Berger mentions its use as a black tea substitute for those trying to lower their caffeine intake due to its similar taste and tannin content.<sup>1</sup>

**Safety/Contraindications:** No safety issues have been reported with the toxicity of the plant. However there is a slight worry taking too much in the first trimester of pregnancy and thereby 'overtoneing' the uterus so that the placenta has a hard time detaching from the uterine wall. It is therefore recommended that limit use of raspberry leaves to the second and third trimester.<sup>12</sup>

### **Classic formulas:**

#### Raspberry Brandy

Pick fine dry fruit, put it into a stone jar, and the jar into a kettle of water, or on a hot hearth, till the juice will run; strain, and to every pint add 1/2 lb. of sugar, give one boil and skim it; when cold, put equal quantities of juice and brandy, shake well and bottle. Some people prefer it stronger of the brandy. -----(*Old Cookery-Book.*) (botanical.com)



**Combinations:** A good pairing for Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) leaves would be Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) leaves. Both display emmenagogue affects, which frees the flow of blood from a stagnant or blocked uterus. They also both help in the regulation of menstrual cycles as well.

Left: Watercolor on paper  
"Moontime" by Amanda Benson

**Preparations and doses:** Leaves are usually prepared in an infusion, 1 cup boiling water over 2 teaspoon of dried leaf and let steep for 10-15 minutes, or long cold infusion for 4-8 hours to extract more of the mineral nutrients. 1 8 ounce cup 3 times a day for toning the uterus during last trimester of pregnancy. In tincture form 1 teaspoon 3 times a day.<sup>2</sup> The berries are best as food source of flavonoids.

**Ecological Issues:** *None found*

**Personal experiences:** I discovered raspberry leaves first as a medicine for treating nausea during to pregnancy in a fantasy novel I was reading while in my first year of college. I am strongly drawn to herbs that are touted for women's use. I have always harbored a slight obsession for all things feminine and sacred, and to me raspberry embodies that within one plant. Perhaps it is because in some ways it looks like a feminine plant, it leaves fall in a womb and ovaries patterns, it little red berries peaking out at you coyly, and just like a woman it also has claws, its prickles ready to protect itself from the careless and overzealous. I started taking raspberry as a tonic for my menstrual cycles once I learned more about its properties and that pregnancy wasn't the only reason to take the stuff. I immediately fell in love with the taste, and over the years have begun to crave it once I ovulate and till my period ends. I find the tea calming. When I have mild diarrhea it's the first thing in my cupboard I reach for. Its mild toning action on my gut gives me time to re-hydrate while my body rebalances itself. I use it as a tonic as I drink it I visualize how I am feeding my body and feminine spirit at the same time. I always keep a stock of this herb in my cupboard ready to help myself through my ever changing cycles.

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