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ECHINACEA: *Echinacea angustifolia*, *E. purpurea*, *E. padilla*



Photo by Mindy Capello

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: I use *Echinacea purpurea* and *Echinacea angustifolia* (combined in equal parts) in my practice. *Angustifolia* is difficult to grow around here, so I mix it with the *purpurea*. I once heard from Paul Bergner that he likes to combine *angustifolia*, *purpurea*, and the *padilla* all together and finds this works well. It is an herb I use often. My favorite memory of this was with a client of mine who had burned her arm with steam and had been applying raw honey to it regularly (on her own), and when she came to me, she had an infection. Her arm had a 3” red raised infection circling the whole arm. She did not have insurance and did not want to go to the Doctor. I told her to take 1/2 tsp every hour and put a line around her infection to ensure it started shrinking. By evening it had reduced by half, and the next day it was hardly infected. This was early on in my herbal career, and I was thoroughly impressed! I’ve used it and the decoction topically for various infections, and it has yet to fail me. Many clients of mine who are prone to strep keep this on hand and, at the 1st sign of getting sick, will take *Echinacea* tincture to prevent strep from happening, and this so far has been successful. I’ve often used the tincture as a throat gargle for clients with sore throats. Most people have this on-hand so it is hand for this use.

I find the debate of whether one should take breaks from *Echinacea* interesting. Some herbalists say you should always take a break, and some say it is a stimulant; why would you want to be constantly stimulated? Others say they have used long-term with no ill effects. One way or the other, I’ve used it for about six months now to support my lymphatic system, and I have not gotten sick when I thought I should have. What does that mean? Nothing but the debate is interesting nonetheless. Another debate is the use of *Echinacea* in those with autoimmunity. It seems like the main consensus among most herbalists is that those with autoimmune diseases like lupus and MS can cause a flare, but with other autoimmune disorders, most have not noticed a flare. I have Hashimoto’s and fibromyalgia, and six months of use did not seem to flare it for me. Caution would be advised as each person is unique.

- Fresh *Echinacea angustifolia* root. This is an experience I will never forget! My first time receiving the fresh root as a good herbalist does; you should try it and experience it. At first, it started ok. But I went all in when I ate it and chewed it in the back of my mouth. It hit the bitter receptors, and I tell you, it made me gag. Wow. I had to spit it out. Same with the tincture. At first, it is nice and sweet, almost pleasant. I also could not get the taste/feel of the tingle out of my mouth. I found that, like with spicy things, a little almond milk helped quell that taste and feeling. Freshly dried *Angustifolia* root is a much more palatable experience. It was more the flavor. It is a pretty root... is dark and has many black markings when cut. I have never tasted dried *Echinacea purpurea*, but I have tasted it fresh. The flower and leaf are a much more pleasant tasting experience, and the tingling you get on your tongue is weak compared to the tincture of fresh *Echinacea purpurea*; the tincture of *Echinacea purpurea* is a bit more diluted also with the numbing feeling in your mouth.

COMMON NAMES: *Echinacea*, coneflower, purple coneflower, purple Kansas coneflower, comb flower, Missouri snakeroot black sampson, scurvy root, Indian head, black susans and hedgehog

PLANT FAMILY: Asteraceae: Aster or sunflower family

GENUS AND SPECIES: *Echinacea angustifolia*, *E. purpurea*, *E. pallida*



BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION:

- Native to North America, parts of Canada
- Grows 2-4' high, and most grow from a taproot. Stems are hard, hairy, unbranched, and straight. Leaves are hairy, ovate, and alternate. The petals are pinkish to purplish and arranged around a bristly cone-shaped seed head. Angustifolia leaves and flowers are longer and thinner than purpurea. The leaves of Angustifolia are lighter, thinner, rougher, and hairier than purpurea. The petals are a bit lighter in color and sparser than purpurea.

Angustifolia purpurea below – Photo's by Mindy Capello





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Photos of *Echinacea Angustifolia* below by Mindy Capello – note the leaves are lighter.



PARTS USED: *Echinacea angustifolia* root, *E. purpurea* areal parts, *E. pallida* roots.

Photo of *Angustifolia* Root – by Mindy Capello



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TASTES: Sweet in the beginning and ending. Pungent

DEGREE OF ACTION: 3rd degree

FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS: bitter stimulant

PRIMARY ACTIONS: alterative, sialagogue, lymphatic

HISTORY:

- Lloyd mentions its uses for pain and inflammation. Inflammation of the lymph, peritonitis, sepsis, pyelitis, and cystitis. He also notes that it is
- “It is useful to combat tissue alterations caused by infections, gangrene, boils, sloughing ulcerations, and the various forms of septicemia.” – Scudder from the Gleaner #38
- In Ellingwood Therapeutics Vol 2 T. (“Ellingwood’s Therapeutist,” 1908)
 - JENSEN, M. D., notes using this in treatment for Pneumonia with a temp of 103 and moist skin, and he found it helpful in septic conditions.
 - J. Harrison Perry notes its use combined with Thuja for an abscess.
 - T. JENSEN, M. D., notes using it for lockjaw and a skin infection.

OVERVIEW OF USE:

- For Bacterial and Viral infections at 1st signs
- Boils, carbuncles, acne, ulcerations, bed sores, and abscesses or other puss-filled wounds topically and internally
- Colds and Upper Respiratory infections and Strep throat
- Signature use: for Septic conditions, boils, black tongue, and swollen lymph nodes.

CLINICAL USE:

- Cooling and slightly drying acid. It causes numbing of the tongue that is very stimulating to the mouth and gag reflex.
- Immune stimulant, diffusive, antiseptic, antibacterial, wound healing, anti-viral
- As an antibacterial, it helps prevent the spread of bacterial infections internally and is used topically.
- MOUTH: as a mouthwash for peritonitis, dry mouth, and toothache.



- **IMMUNE SYSTEM:**
 - Immune stimulant. Triggers the production of white blood cells
 - Stimulates the lymphatic system.
 - Inhibits hyaluronidase, which is helpful in wound healing and preventing the spread of infections.
 - I cannot help but Quote Jim McDonald here as it could not be put any better on Echinacea's benefits for the immune system.
 - Echinacea is "like something that "mans the battlements" of the castle (body) to protect it from external invasion. Another useful analogy would be to think about using echinacea like a fire extinguisher if, perhaps, you were to accidentally knock a dishrag onto your stove: you'd use it immediately and liberally. In using this plant to "prevent colds," you need to take it in frequent (initially hourly, perhaps) dropperful doses to smother the infection" (McDonald, n.d.)
 - He also notes that you want to take Echinacea at the first sign of illness for it to work best, and to quote him, "Germs are like fleas... they reproduce exponentially, and if you wait till they reach epidemic levels, it's a lot harder for the echinacea to play catch up, and it won't be nearly as effective, and sometimes may seem ineffective" (McDonald, n.d.)
- **RESPIRATORY SYSTEM:**
 - Helpful for Strep infections with direct contact.
 - Helpful in preventing cold and Upper Respiratory Infections.
- **URINARY TRACT SYSTEM**
 - Helpful for clearing up urinary tract infections.

SCIENTIFIC STUDIES:

- Echinacea may have a shortened duration of cold: [A proprietary extract from the echinacea plant \(Echinacea purpurea\) enhances systemic immune response during a common cold - Goel - 2005 - Phytotherapy Research - Wiley Online Library](#)
 - A study that showed no difference: [Treatment of the common cold with unrefined echinacea. A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- Antioxidant activity of Echinacea: <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/jf990677%2B>



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- Testing of different types of Echinacea and its immunomodulatory activity [Results of five randomized studies on the immunomodulatory activity of preparations of Echinacea - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- Echinacea in prevention of colds:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0149291806000415>

PLANT CONSTITUENTS:

- Echinacoside, Echinacin, alkamides, volatile oils, flavonoids, quercetin, caffeic acid derivatives,
- Polysaccharides, which are immune-stimulating
- Alkamides, which are anti-inflammatory and aid in wound healing
- Inulin (which gives it the milky white substance that can settle at the bottom of a tincture)

DOSAGE AND METHOD OF DELIVERY:

- TINCTURE: 1-4ml 3-6x/day
- Often recommended in an active infection to take larger doses every 1-2 hours.
- Tincture fresh only
 - Angustifolia Root, Purpurea areal parts, Pallida Root 1:1 95%A

CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

- PREGNANCY: None
- LACTATION: None
- Caution in those with autoimmunity. It has been seen to cause an autoimmune flare.



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Photo for further identification purposes for *Angustifolia purpurea* – by Mindy Capello



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