

ALOE VERA

“The Medicine Plant Aloe Vera” THE HISTORY OF ALOE VERA

Aloe Vera or “the first aid plant” as some people call it, is one of the species of Aloe and is widespread throughout the tropics but its effectiveness as a plant with curative powers is reported throughout the world. Aloe Vera means “True Aloe” and is so named because, of about two hundred species of Aloe, only Aloe Vera is considered by some people to have the best medical properties.

For more than three thousand years Aloe Vera has been reportedly used for medicinal purposes. One of the earliest written references to this plant can be found in the Bible, John: 19-39 “Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him at night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes.” In biblical times aloes were very valuable. It is said that the women of ancient Egypt and Greece used the gel from the Aloe Vera plant to improve their complexions and skin texture. Indeed some believe that Cleopatra’s beauty can be credited to this plant. The effectiveness of Aloe Vera as a beauty treatment for velvety skin and lustrous, gleaming hair, was so remarkable that some ancient maidens claimed that it was a gift from Venus, the Goddess of Love.

Down through the ages people of many civilizations have praised the miracle-like results produced by the Aloe Vera plant. Mexicans have rubbed the thick, gelatinous juice from this plant into the scalp and hair. They claim it prevents baldness and stimulates the growth of healthy, shiny and manageable hair. Hawaiians have gathered the leaves of this plant and crushed them to produce a paste to relieve arthritic pains and to sooth sunburn discomfort and prevent blistering and peeling of the skin. Indians of our hemisphere claim that the juice of the Aloe Vera plant can be used as a tonic for better digestion and for the relief of ulcers and poor elimination.

USES OF ALOE VERA - MYTHS OR MIRACLES?

Today the Aloe Vera plant is still used by many people of many countries who maintain that it is nature’s “cure-all” drug for an

unending list of ills. Undoubtedly there is an explanation. The juice of this plant is often added to drinks in cases of congestion and to prevent and counteract colic. It has also been used to help purify water since its chemical properties remove chlorine or fluoridation taste. The leaves of the plant are sometimes used for the treatment of infections of the skin and contusions, rheumatism, arthritis and aching joints. It is said the pulp is used in the treatment of tumors, ulcers, open sores, ringworms, boils, acne, allergy rashes, psoriasis, itchings, burns and scalds, insect stings and poison ivy. The gel of Aloe Vera, when blended with milk and papaya is believed to help kidney infections, sluggish livers, dysentery, stomach ulcers and colitis.

The endless number of stories referring to the curative powers of Aloe Vera have not been ignored by medical researchers. Indeed, with the discovery of the electron microscope science soon recognized Aloe Vera as a most valuable of medical materials. Today medical researchers are known to be exploring the possibility of using Aloe Vera as a cure for cancerous conditions in the digestive tract as well as a possible medication in the treatment of ulcers. The list of cures this plant is reported to provide is truly impressive. It’s no wonder that Aloe Vera is also referred to as “The Miracle Plant” and “Heaven’s Blessing.” However, we don’t believe in miracles.

ALOE VERA – HOW AND WHY IT HEALS

It is said that the chemical ingredients in Aloe Vera are: nataloin, aloin, emodin, bitter resins, barboloin, chlorophyll, albumin, essential oil, gum, arabic coloring matter, silica, phosphate of lime and a trace of iron. These scientific names mean little to those of us who are unfamiliar with the field of chemistry. However the mixture of these chemicals in the Aloe Vera plant produce basic substances with which we are acquainted; antibiotics, astringents, a pain inhibitor and a growth stimulator whose function is to promote the healing of injured surfaces. If you cut an incision in the leaf of the Aloe Vera, the juices of the plant will spurt out and within a few minutes a thin film will form over the incision. The film then solidifies into a rubberlike, protective coating which effectively seals off loss of plant moisture. In a very short time the original incision will be

completely healed. This was probably the very process which man watched when he first thought of the Aloe Vera as a cure for his wounds also. No one knows exactly how the Aloe Vera accomplishes all of its amazing feats but one major belief is that the gel of this plant rebuilds body tissue by stimulating the growth of cells. This may explain why there is little or no scar tissue after a burn or wound has healed.

To obtain the clear gel from the Aloe Vera is a very simple process; you need only to split a leaf and peel back the skin. The gel will then be immediately visible and ready for use. Many feel that the quickest way to obtain relief from discomfort caused by burns, scalds or open wounds is to bandage the split leaf itself to the affected area. For internal consumption the gel can be placed in some water in the refrigerator and then taken in teaspoon quantities or mixed with fruit drinks or other flavors.

There are those who claim that a normal, healthy person drinking Aloe Vera gel is more likely to stay healthy than a non-user. Whatever your own conclusions may be regarding the curative powers of this plant, there is no doubt that you will find it truly unique in its appearance and history.

ALOE VERA GROWING INSTRUCTIONS

Aloe Vera is not only cultivated for its wonder herb, which makes it a very popular item in health food stores, but also because it is a hardy, ornamental and virtually pest free plant. You will often come across it in public buildings and gardens because of its stiff, rugged habit.

Although Aloe Vera is native to the tropical climate, it can be grown in colder climates by treating it as a tender pot plant. It likes rich soil, partial shade and adequate, but not excessive water in soil with good drainage. Standing water around the roots must be avoided at all costs since it will rot the plant. Water the plant only when dry, usually once a week. Frost will immediately kill the Aloe Vera so be sure to protect it at all times from extreme temperatures.

The color of the flowers vary depending on the species of the Aloe Vera. Most, however, are orange and others are cream-colored. Some species develop flowers as early as 10 months while others will produce flowers only when the plant has reached maturity (3 years).

It is said that the gel of the Aloe Vera should not be extracted until the plant has reached maturity. However, other sources report that the gel can be extracted for use at anytime. The use of the Aloe Vera plant is not limited to the extraction of its gel. There are some people who use the leaves of this plant in salads. Although the taste is said to be quite bitter, the addition of spices can make the leaves more palatable.

As the plant grows it should be transplanted into larger containers.

In non-freezing areas you can plant outdoors almost any place in your garden. This plant is easy to care for inside the home. It also makes an ideal patio plant. Fertilize about every 3 months if you wish to speed up growth.

The Aloe Vera plant has many uses. Whether you choose to cultivate it for its famous gel or just as an ornamental plant, there is no doubt that it will provide you and your friends with many moments of interesting conversation.

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