

## ***Meadowsweet – Queen of the Meadow***

I love Her graceful presence by Riverbank and Meadow. Her creamy-white heads bowing in the breeze, often adorned with the buzz, buzz, buzzing of Bees, a sure sign of summer. Dear Meadowsweet, also known as Meadwort and Bridewort. She is part of the rose family and flowers from June-August. This old medicinal herb stands tall between 80 - 200cm and has dark green leaves, like those of large rose petals. Her flowering heads have a lovely sweet smell and taste.



The lacey flowers make a beautiful addition to summer fruit-salads, young leaves can be added to salads or cooked as you would spinach. In Folk Medicine Meadowsweet is particularly valued for its salicylic acid compounds as well as its tannins. Salicylic acid has an analgesic, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial effect. It is often used as a remedy for menstrual pain, heart-burn, joint pain, skin diseases, abdominal fullness and reducing fevers.



The herb can be applied in different ways; as a *tea* with either fresh or dried flower- heads (and young fresh leaves), *tincture*, an ingredient for a *steam bath* or *herbal wine*. Pregnant women and asthmatics are advised not to use Meadowsweet.

You can meet Meadowsweet as you walk or cycle along the River heading north to Wolvercote, in meadows that flood over winter and other wild edge-lands. As She seems to thrive on land that floods I've planted Meadowsweet on my allotment and Her gloriously white, lacey heads have been blossoming this summer next to Yarrow, Moon daises, Comfrey and Courgettes.

### ***Gathering Meadowsweet***

Take your time on a warm, dry day to forage with a collecting bag, pair of scissors (the stems are woody), and offerings to the land for the gift you are being given. Take time to notice what is growing around Meadowsweet. Today I saw red and white Clover, Cow Vetch, Buttercup, many unknown graceful grasses, Angelica, Ash, Hawthorn, Willows, Nettle, and Bramble.

As always when foraging collect away from traffic and other pollutants and harvest above knee height when possible. Only take what you need, leaving plenty of this herb for pollinators and other foragers. When you have eyed a stem that is flowering (don't pick stems where the flowers have started to go over or leaves that have mildew on them) ask the plant for permission to take a stem and listen-feel for the response. If you feel a 'no' then thank



the plant and move on. When you get a 'yes', make an offering to the plant in gratitude for its gift and cut the stem. Give the stem a shake to release any insects gathered in the fluffy flower-head.

Take care when carrying Meadowsweet home as the heads are delicate. Once home the heads can be used fresh and straight away. Don't wash them as you will lose a lot of the flowers. I often dry Meadowsweet so that I have the medicine over winter. To do this tie a small handful in a bundle at the end of the long stems. Gently place a paper bag over the heads and tie the bag. Hang the herb bundle in the bag in an airy room for a few weeks. When completely dry place the herb in a clean jam jar and label it. Along with Elderflower tincture and Elderberries, Meadowsweet can be part of your winter medicine trove.



***Ally Stott – Plot 77***