

NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE



Source: *Wasteland* by Denise Peat

BLOOD CLEANSERS IN THE KITCHEN

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SUMMARY: We review the concept of blood toxicity, how it occurs and the general approaches to addressing it. Simple tips on how to forage, prepare, and consume stinging nettle, dandelion, and cleavers are presented, with kitchen-tested recipes.

Introduction

Blood is the river of life. Blood is the sewage system of life. Therein lies the dialectic. Orders of complexity of biological life require a method of intaking, distributing and removing waste products. The focal point of this process is the blood.

Blood toxicity is the net accumulation of waste products that have not been sufficiently

metabolized and excreted by the emunctory organs. The primary emunctories of blood cleansing

are the liver and kidneys as they are the filtering organs. The lung stands as a secondary emunctory as it does not filter, but it does allow for the removal of CO₂ for acidity regulation. The hollow structures: gallbladder, intestines, bladder and lymphatics are tertiary organs as their function is as a conduit of waste removal. Finally, there is skin,

having served as the primordial emunctory, it now is the emunctory of last resort.

Thus, it is no surprise that most blood cleansing plants act on one or more of the organs or channels mentioned. The key to selecting blood cleansing plants is to first identify the existence of blood toxicity. It presents as a general feeling of heat and the exposure of tissues to toxins, for example the skin (e.g. rashes, urticaria), joints (e.g. arthrosis), or hollow organs (e.g. sterile cystitis, sterile meningitis).

The second step is to identify the dysfunctional emunctories. Thus, skin disorders implicate the liver, gallbladder and intestines, whereas joint disorders imply the kidney and liver.

When addressing active disorders, the use of plants in medicinal strength preparations (tisanes, tinctures, etc.) is most efficient. (For a monograph evaluation of these three plants and their endobiogenic applications, please see Anna Betz's article: [Herbs that move, cleanse and nourish the blood](#)). However, for general health or prevention of seasonal flare ups, alimentary consumption of blood cleansers is a good choice. It is efficient, but also empowers the patient to have agency over their *health* rather than just their *illness*.

There are many possible plants that could have been proposed. We chose three that are common throughout the world and easy to forage or purchase. The first is stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*). The leaf is a hepatobiliary and hepatorenal drainer, and is anti-allergic. The root acts as a stronger depurative and renal drainer than the leaf. The second is dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*). It has a stronger action than nettles, and is more oriented towards toxicity that affects the emunctories themselves, e.g. gallstones, kidney stones, etc., as well as joint disorders. The third is cleavers (*Galium aparine*). Cleavers great focus is on cleansing the ground matrix (the extracellular space) and the lymphatics, with secondary hepatobiliary and hepatorenal drainage. It can be used as a general drainer and revitalizer, especially in combination with other depuratives and drainers. Turmeric

(*Curcuma longa*) and burdock (*Arctium lappa*) are undeniable for their efficacy as blood cleansers. However, given their general popularity and availability, we chose to spotlight other excellent plants. With the recipes below, you can begin experimenting with the cleansing powers of these restorative plants.

STINGING NETTLE

If you have spent time hiking mountain trails or walking along streams, you most likely have encountered the touch of the stinging nettle. This perennial herb is found in most places around the world and in some places is considered to be a noxious weed. The sting of the *Urtica dioica* or Stinging Nettle is usually just a mild irritation on the skin, which is why most people try to avoid finding it. However, with a slight shift of perception, this proliferous herb can become a thrill to find when out strolling along the streams of meadows and hillsides.

Once you discover the earthy taste and the rich green color, this once annoying weed becomes a culinary delight. Foraging for Nettle is not only an opportunity to enhance your nutrition, it is also a unique way to spend time adventuring outside. Invite a beloved friend or family member with you and the hunt becomes a splendor to the senses. Bring some gloves, scissors, and a light weight bag so you are prepared. Gathering Nettle is easy. You might decide the sting is tolerable and perhaps even exciting because it means you have found the appropriate plant!

Where to Find It

The stinging nettle prefers damp and fertile soil which is why it can often be found along small streams or near well watered gardens. Look for them along hedgerows, in fields, woodlands, and meadows.

Harvesting and Prepping

The ideal time to harvest Stinging Nettle is early Spring BEFORE it flowers. Once the flowers have blossomed, it is best to wait until late Fall to harvest again. Using young, smaller leaves is the ideal choice.

Once you have brought the nettle home, a quick rinse in a colander will take the sting away and blanching it in boiling water for 3 minutes is a great way to begin adding it to soups, sauces, smoothies, tea, and maybe even baked goods.

The Nettle plant is best consumed when it is fresh. An easy way to preserve fresh Nettle leaves is to blanch them in boiling water for 1-3 minutes, blending them into a puree, and freezing them in individual serving sized containers. Using an ice cube tray is a great way to store individual sized servings that can be added to smoothies and teas.

If harvesting Nettle is not available to you, purchasing dried Nettle is also a good option. A simple tea made with dried Nettle can be a great addition to a detoxifying diet.

Practical Application

Think of this like it is spinach. How do you use spinach?



STINGING NETTLE SOUP WITH ZUCCHINI/COURGETTE

Ingredients:

2 cups (480ml) fresh nettle, washed, thick stems removed, and blanched in water for 3 minutes.

2 cups/480 ml of nettle water, set aside

2 TB (30 ml) grass fed butter or ghee

1 medium sized yellow onion, chopped

1/4 cup (60 ml) white wine

2 stalks celery, chopped

6 medium sized zucchini /courgettes cut into 1 inch pieces.

1 tsp. (8 grams) dried rosemary

1 tsp. (8 grams) fine sea salt

1/4 tsp (2 grams) black pepper

1 tsp. (8 grams) Herbs De Provence (thyme, rosemary, fennel, lavender)

water, or broth, if needed to thin the soup

Blender or food processor

Directions:

1. Blanch the washed nettle for 3 minutes in boiling water.
2. Drain the nettle and measure 2 well packed cups of cooked nettle.
3. Reserve 2 cups (480ml) nettle water and set it aside.
4. Heat the butter or ghee in a large soup pot.
5. Saute the chopped onion in the butter until soft and translucent.
6. Add the chopped celery, zucchini, rosemary, salt, and pepper.
7. Slowly add the wine and let it simmer with the vegetables until the vegetables are tender.
8. Pour in 2 cups (480ml) reserved nettle water and simmer until the vegetables are soft.
9. Pour the cooked vegetables into a high power blender or blend with an upright hand blender until smooth and bright green.
10. Add water or vegetable broth to thin if necessary.
11. Place the blended soup back in the pot, if using a blender.
12. Simmer for 15 minutes on medium/low heat.
13. Add the Herbs De Provence.
14. Add additional salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 6

Serving Suggestions: Serve with crusty sourdough bread. Enjoy!!



STINGING NETTLE PESTO

Sliced sweet potato, boiled

Nettle pesto

Dandelion greens

Sliced tomato

Broccoli sprouts

Mint leaf on top

Ingredients:

- 2 cups (16 oz.) stinging nettle blanched, drained, and packed
- 5 TB green pepitas/pumpkin seeds (unsalted)
- 4 TB hemp seeds
- 2 TB pine nuts
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup fresh mint or basil
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 3 TB fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Lemon zest
- 1/2 cup olive oil

1/2 cup grape seed oil

1/4 cup fresh shredded Parmesan cheese

Food processor

(Optional pomegranate molasses to drizzle on the top)

Directions:

1. Wash, blanch and measure nettle.
2. Add all ingredients to the food processor and blend until all ingredients are incorporated and large chunks are gone.
3. Store in a glass jar with a lid for up to 5 days.

Serving Suggestions:

Serve on top of a sandwich. This goes well with crusty sourdough bread or on top of sliced and boiled sweet potato as seen in the image above. This is also good as a dip for crackers and cut vegetables.



CLEAVER

Where to Find It

Sometimes referred to as Goosegrass, these weeds can be found in moist or grassy places, such as along riverbanks. They are often found twined through hedges and shrubs producing long sticky stems that can stick to clothing. They often grow close to Stinging Nettle.

Harvesting

Similar to their friend, the stinging nettle, harvest young plants in the Spring. It is ideal when they begin to grow small white flowers on them. Be mindful to keep the flowers on the plant when you harvest these. That means cutting above the flower. Leaving the flower behind allows the plant to go to seed and germinate, creating more cleaver plants in the future.

Harvesting cleavers is healthy for the mind and the body. Take note of the surrounding plants and the sounds of the birds around you. An expression of gratitude can be an encouraging gesture for the plant to thrive within you and continue to grow around you. Harvesting in itself can be healing.

Practical Application

Juicing the Cleavers in a juicer is a great way to extract the vitamin rich liquid from the leaves. Once you have the juice, store individual servings in the freezer and defrost when ready to use. Simply adding 3 oz. of the juice to a 4 cup pitcher of water is a great way to prepare a nutrient rich drink.

The juice can also be added to hot water for tea and also to soups and smoothies.

Blending cleavers with a little water in a blender is another way to prepare cleavers for later use. Store the puree in ice cube trays to add to smoothies, soups, teas.

Cleavers taste good sauteed with garlic and grass fed butter.

Chopping the leaves small, they can be treated as an herb to toss into a salad, marinade, or soup.

DANDELION

Dandelion leaves are another great addition to your blood cleansing pantry.

The spicy taste of the leaves resemble the taste of arugula. The entire plant is edible, including the flower, leaves, and roots.

Where to find it

Found most often in lawns, this broadleaf perennial weed can thrive in almost any kind of habitat. Look for them in the openings of deep woods, rocky hillsides, and fertile garden areas. Dandelions can also thrive indoors, in a pot.

Harvesting

Dandelions taste best when they are harvested before they bloom in the Spring and after they are finished blooming in the late Fall.

When harvesting wild dandelion leaves, be certain they have not been exposed to pesticides, herbicides, or chemicals sprayed on them. If you are uncertain about what the plants have been exposed to, growing them yourself, purchasing them from your local farm or market is the best way to enjoy the healing taste of the dandelion leaves.

To enjoy the whole plant, dig below the roots and gently pull them with roots intact.

Practical application

These thick and richly green leaves are a beautiful addition to any simple salad or as a topping for a sandwich, toast, or pizza. Another simple way to prepare them is by sautéing them in garlic with grass fed butter or Ghee. The simplest way to add them to your diet is to toss them in a smoothie or enjoy a cup of dandelion tea.

Dandelion roots can be dried, chopped, and steeped to make a rich and brown dandelion Coffee. The flowers make beautiful garnishes and can also be sautéed or fried.



DANDELION KALE SALAD WITH TURMERIC CARROT DRESSING

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch dandelion greens
- 1 bunch Kale
- 1 sweet potato, washed, diced, skin left on
- 2 fresh beets, washed and diced
- 1 parsnip, washed and diced
- 2 TB avocado oil (or oil of choice)
- Sea salt
- Goat cheese

For the Dressing:

- 2 medium carrots, chopped or grated (about 1 1/4 cups)
- 1/2 cup (120ml) filtered water
- 1/2 cup (35 grams) raw macadamia nuts or cashews
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 3 Tb (45 ml) freshly squeezed lime juice
- 3 inch piece scallion, white and light green parts only, coarsely chopped
- 1 garlic clove

1/2 tsp. Fine sea salt, plus more to taste

1 tsp tamari, plus more to taste

One 3 inch (7.5 cm) piece fresh turmeric, peeled and chopped

Directions for Salad:

- Preheat the oven to 400 F.
- Wash and chop the root vegetables into 1/2 inch cubes.
- Place the root vegetables on a cookie sheet or roasting pan, drizzle with 1 TB olive oil.
- Roast the root vegetables 30 minutes or until fork tender.
- Wash and dry the greens.
- Chop the kale and dandelion into small pieces and place in a serving bowl.
- Drizzle 1 TB oil over the greens and sprinkle sea salt to taste.
- Massage the greens with washed hands until they soften.
- Prepare the carrot turmeric dressing as directed below.

Directions for Carrot Turmeric Dressing:

1. Combine the carrots, water, nuts, olive oil, lime juice, scallion, garlic, salt, tamari, and turmeric in an upright blender
2. Blend until completely smooth (about 1 minute)
3. Scrape down the sides with a rubber spatula and blend again.
4. Use immediately or store in a glass jar for up to 3 days. Shake well before using.

(The dressing will thicken a little in the refrigerator. Use a little water for thinning it, if desired.)

Dressing Credit: Amy Chaplin *Whole Food Cooking Every Day*, 218-219



DETOX SMOOTHIE

Using dandelion, clever, and nettle

Ingredients:

1 cup brewed and cooled clever and nettle tea (1 tsp of each steeped in 8 oz. cup hot water for 5 minutes)

1 cup water

1 apple cut into quarters

1/4 of a cucumber cut in half

1/2 of a lemon cut in half, with the rind included

1 TB green pepitas (pumpkin seeds)

2 TB hemp seeds

1 tsp. Flax seeds

A handful of dandelion greens

4 fresh mint leaves

Ice (optional)

Instructions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a high powered blender.
2. Process until smooth.

DANDELION, CLEAVER, NETTLE MINT TEA

½ tsp. dried cleavers

½ tsp. dried nettle

½ tsp. dried dandelion leaf or root

4 mint leaves

8 oz. water

honey optional

Instructions:

Place the dried plants into a tea strainer and steep in hot water for 5 min.

Option to serve with honey.

Conclusion

Each of these complimentary plants play an important role in blood health and there are simple ways to use them regularly. With a little encouragement they can become a staple ingredient to support a clean diet.

As with any change, it is important to remember that transformation happens when we get rid of the old and bring in the new. This is possible when we discover ways to add one new plant at a time, adopting it into the systems and rituals already in place. For example, if someone already enjoys a particular smoothie recipe regularly, encourage them to add one of these plants to their already beloved smoothie.

From a practical standpoint these plants will not find their way into the routines of people unless they are able to see simple shifts they can make in a system they already have in place. ✱

About the Author

Lizzie Johnson is a mother of 4 children, a professional Health and Life Coach, a Fitness Trainer, and a Social Worker (BS). She lives in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA with her husband Adam. She is passionate about listening, rhythmic living, and holistic eating. Her coaching practice is devoted to helping clients create personalized systems that move them towards healthier ways of living.

CONFLICTS

No conflicts of interest.