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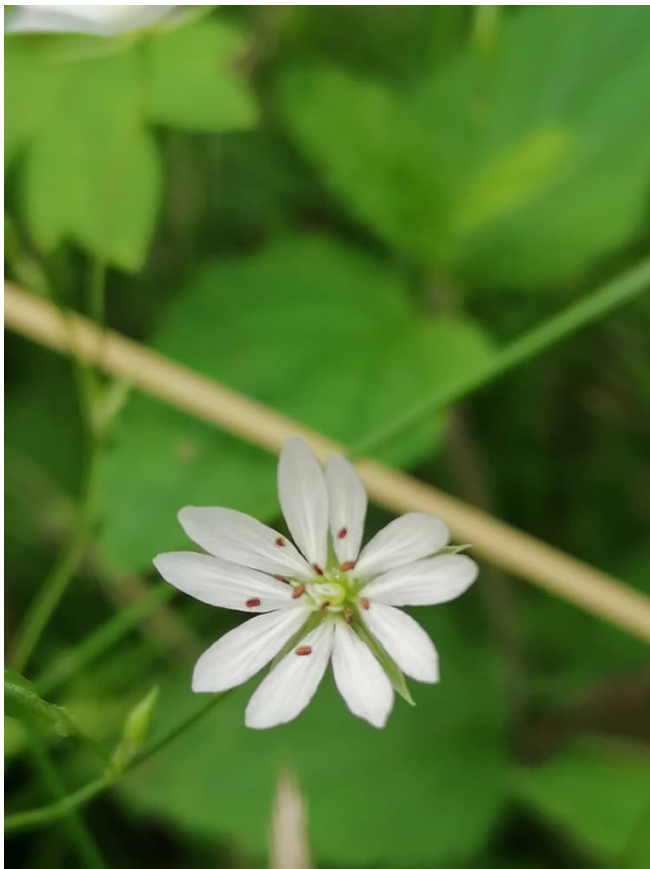


Figure 2 Image by Schriftstellerin: M.E. Lee Jonas from Pixabay

Herb:	Stellaria media
Common Name	Stitchwort, Starweed, starwort, satin flower, winter weed, star chickweed, Tongue Grass, Adders Mouth (Kloss, 1995); (Young, 2019)
Family	Caryophyllaceae
Ayurvedic / TCM Name	Yin chai hu
Parts Used	Leaves, flowers
Native Region	Europe and Asia
Geographic Distribution	Grows throughout the Northern hemisphere
Botanical Description	Chickweed is a low creeping annual plant, which grows to about 2-12 inches tall with smooth ovate leaves and hairy leafstalks and stems, although the stem is 'hairy' it is distinctive in that it has one line of hair, and the hairs change sides at each node. The flowers are made up of five split white petals and give the blossom a distinctive 'star' look which is indicative of one of the common names Starweed. It is found in empty lots and neglected areas and disturbed ground such as pathways, next to plowed fields, pastures and meadows, gardens, roadsides, etc. (Foster, Duke 2014)
Harvesting Guidelines	<p>Harvest aerial parts of chickweed while they are still young and bright green and avoid harvesting if it has gone to seed. Its best to snip the upper parts and leave some lower leaves. Snip instead of pulling because of chickweed's elasticity of the stems which can break wrong or not at all and pull up the root which you want to leave (unless you are removing from an area where you don't want it to grow) (de la Foret, Han, 2020)</p> <p>Before I knew much about chickweed I was intrigued by the elasticity on the stems, I was weeding and as I was pulling chickweed, I noticed it stretching – which I thought so strange and unique and perhaps useful. I was</p>

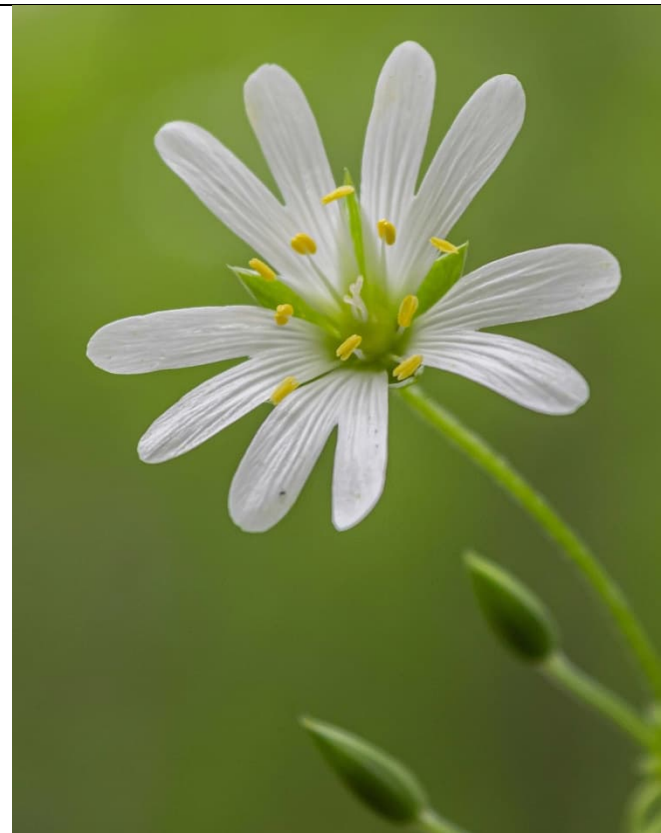


Figure 3 Image by superemelka from Pixabay

delighted to learn of its benefits on the skin once I started researching it.

There are no sustainability issues with chickweed as it is quite a hardy little plant which requires little if no maintenance. If you plant chickweed, sow seeds directly in the soil in early spring depending on your location (some places with more temperate climates you can sow in the Fall). Water and keep moist until you see seedlings (de la Foret, Han 2020).

Cautions: There are two poisonous plants that look very similar to chickweed. Scarlet Pimpernel is a very close match to chickweed when not in bloom. The key difference is that there is no line of hairs on the stems as with chickweed, and when blooming, the flowers can be red, orange or blue. The other similar plant is spurge (*Euphorbia* spp). Spurge also has smooth stems, and the leaves are opposite each other on the stem. Spurge also produces a milky sap while chickweed does not (de la Foret, Han, 2020).

#### Constituents

alkaloids, tannins, phenolic compounds, phenolic acids, saponins, triterpenoids, flavonoids, magnesium, Vitamins A, C, E, B-Complex, sodium, zinc, bioflavonoids, copper, iron, manganese, phosphorus, (de la Foret, 2020); droxycourarins, carbonylic acids (Hoffman, 2003); mucilage, silica (Ody, 2017); oligosaccharide stellariose, anthraquinone derivatives, fatty acid (Oladeji, 2020)

#### Uses (Traditional, Modern, Scientific Research):

Obesity, diabetes, skin infections, itchy skin (Green, 2000), inflammation, gastric ulcers, stomach cramps, coughing, kidney disorders, eye irritations (de la Foret, Han 2020).

Chickweed is best when it is fresh, either eaten, tinctured or prepared other ways. It doesn't store well so it should be used while fresh, preserve by freezing, or convert to a tincture or salve (Gladstar, 2012). It is a good strengthening herb for early spring to beat the winter blahs. Add to salads, or in other meals, or cook like spinach. Create an herbal vinegar to extract the nutritional benefits of chickweed. It can be dried and used in teas, its potency declines rapidly, so if using dried, within a couple of weeks (de la Foret, Han, 2020).

Nutritionally, chickweed is outstanding as it contains many nutrients such as beta-carotene, calcium, fiber, iron, magnesium, niacin, phosphorus, potassium, Vitamin C, and zinc (de la Foret, Han, 2020). A delicious chickweed vinegar is available in Wild Remedies, page 85 (de la Foret, Han, 2020). It is an excellent restorative for thin, malnourished constitutions, as well as helping to regulate hypothyroidism (Wood, 2008). Because of chickweed's many nutrients and

abundance of vitamins and minerals, it's a perfect tonic herb for re-starting our systems after winter. The high chlorophyll content helps to restore oxygen to the blood, helping to revitalize us after a long cold winter (Young, 2019)

Chickweed's elasticity is indicative of its benefits for the skin and helping to increase skin tissue regeneration (de la Foret, Han, 2020). While chickweed is extremely beneficial for skin issues, it can take several months of steady use to achieve results (de la Foret/Han 2020). Chickweed may soothe severe itchiness where all other remedies have failed (Chevallier, 2016).

Chickweed is especially useful for itching and irritation from eczema and psoriasis, but also has a 'reputation' as a remedy for rheumatism when taking internally (Hoffman, 1996).

An excellent eczema easing salve recipe from Colleen Codekas is one I've used for my mom who also has eczema coupled with thin, easily torn skin (from age), it includes chickweed infused oil combined with shea butter and beeswax. It's been very effective with my mother (Codekas, 2018, recipe on page 97).

A poultice of chickweed enclosed in muslin is a sure remedy for a carbuncle or an external abscess (Grieve, 1931). Ody concurs with this remedy and adds that it can also be helpful for rheumatic pain (Ody, 2017). Poultices applied to ulcerations can help with the severity of fever blisters and herpes simplex virus sores (Young, 2019).

Gerard believed that chickweed leaves "boyled in vinegar and salt are good against magines of the hands and legs, if they be bathed therewith" meaning the irritations on hands and legs (Gerard, 1633).

Chickweed helps cramps, convulsions, and palsy (Culpepper, 1652/2019).

Chickweed juice is a 'folk remedy' for obesity and after evaluation it's found that chickweed prevents fat storage by inhibiting enzymes, which results in a slowing of the absorption of fats and carbohydrates (Foster 2019). Chickweed is a good remedy for lipomas (fatty tumors) and can be used for weight loss stimulating both sides of the metabolism, building and breaking down, through the liver and the endocrine system, and it is a proven method for weight loss of the author in his personal experience (Wood, 2008).

The local people of Dibrugarh district of Assam, India use chickweed as a dietary supplement for obesity, and it is a traditional remedy for obesity in India. Phytoconstituents like flavonoids, saponins, and sitosterol have been shown to have anti-obesity properties (Dilip, 2005).

In clinical *in vivo* and *in vitro* studies of a high fat diet in mice, the lyophilized juice (LJ) of chickweed was shown to suppress body weight and reduce cholesterol (Rani, 2012). More clinical study is needed to determine if this effect would be realized in humans.

Chickweed subdues heat and lubricates dry conditions – this is an indication of its tissue states which are 'irritation, atrophy'. Chickweed gently moves the lymphatics and can be extremely useful for swollen lymph glands and stagnant, stressed-out conditions. Chickweed balances the 'waters' of the body, decongesting the lungs, and cleaning metabolic impurities from the lymphatic system. Because it is also an anti-inflammatory, it can help with overall inflammation in the body (Wood, 2008). Kloss believed chickweed is an outstanding herb to use for "any form of internal inflammation" much like de Bairacli Levy and that it "heals and soothes anything it comes in contact with" (Kloss, 2002 reprinted from original in 1939).

Chickweed is exceptional in helping alleviate retained water and urinary tract irritations and infections because it is so gentle and non-drying. Due to its diuretic properties, it helps to 'get things moving' to clear out impurities through the urine. Young was also delighted that chickweed arrives just in time to help clean out our systems after a long winter (Young, 2019).

For all internal inflammation from the bowels to the lungs. (de Bairacli Levy, 1997). It's also recommended as part of a balanced natural diet for dogs (de Bairacli Levy, 1992).

Chickweed's cooling and moistening qualities can sooth irritated, red or dry, or eyes with minor infections (for sty, or conjunctivitis) by applying the fresh plant mashed to a juicy pulp, directly to the affected area (if it is around the eye), or on your closed eye for about ten to twenty minutes. Repeat several times a day until better (de la Foret, Han 2020). de Bairicli Levy mentions in her book that chickweed improves eyesight when eaten as a salad (de Bairicli Levy, 1997), I believe this is due to the high Vitamin A, E, C content and the antioxidant properties in chickweed – all of which are important to eye health.

Chickweed works to restore moisture and lessen irritation for dry hacking coughs, and can support expectoration of mucus in thick, congested coughs. This may be due to the high saponin content (de la Foret, Han, 2020).

An outstanding scientific abstract of Chickweed and all the publications written about it concludes that the major bioactive metabolites (tannins, alkaloids, phenolic compounds, phenolic acids, saponins, triterpenoids, flavonoids and flavonoids aglycone) contribute to strong therapeutic potency of chickweed. Extracts and isolated compounds from chickweed displayed 'pronounced pharmacological activities' justifying the use of chickweed. But also states that researchers haven't done enough to authenticate the therapeutic properties of chickweed and that further scientific study is needed (Oladeji, 2020).

An *in vitro* study into the efficacy of chickweed as an anti-hepatitis B virus (HBV) medicine suggests that it may be useful in the future development of novel anti-HBV drugs. SM-3 effectively suppressed the secretion of HBV antigens from HBV-transfected HepG2.2.15 cells, achieving 9.83%, 19.79%, 24.05%, and 27.92% inhibition of the secretion of HBsAg, and 6.51%, 18.55%, 21.83%, and 25.35% inhibition for HBeAg, at 1, 3, 10, and 30 µg/mL after 6 days of treatment (Ma, 2012).

## Actions

Antirheumatic, vulnerary, emollient (Hoffman, 2003); astringent, demulcent, wound herb (Ody, 2017); antifungal, anti-obesity, antibacterial, antioxidant, anti-proliferative, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antidiabetic, anxiolytic (Oladeji, 2020); laxative, galactagogue, expectorant, diuretic (Young, 2019)

### Preparations

Raw in food, infusions vinegars, tinctures, salves, oils, poultices, compresses (de la Foret, Han, 2020); capsules/powder (Hoffman, 2003)

### Taste

Slightly salty, slightly sweet, mild

### Energy

Cooling, moistening

### Dosage & Safety

Infusion: 6-12 oz boiling water over 2 tsp fresh chickweed, steep 5 minutes, drink 3x daily

Tincture (Fresh herb): 1:2, 95%, 3-5ml 3-5x daily

Tincture (Recently Dried herb): 1:5, 50%, 2-5ml as needed.

Capsules/Powder: 1,000-2,000mg, 2-3x daily

Poultices, washes, other external uses as needed. To ease itching make a strong infusion and pour in bath.

Excessive doses internally may cause diarrhea and vomiting. Can cause allergic reactions, test a small area first. Do not take internally while pregnant or breastfeeding.

## Notes / References

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